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JANUARY 2017

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travel  exchange '17

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COURIER

January 2017



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MARCH ISSUE

Destinations Four Corners U.S. (Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah); Ontario, Québec and Niagara Falls (Canada & U.S.); Egypt, Israel and Jordan

City Spotlight: New York City

Special Coverage

Historical Homes and Gardens

Space Deadline Jan. 6

Material Deadline Jan. 17

APRIL/MAY ISSUE

Destinations Midwest U.S. (Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri); West South Central U.S. (Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas); Africa; Mexico
City Spotlight: Boston

Special Coverage

Faith-based Travel
Travel Exchange '17 Recap
Guide: Restaurants

Space Deadline Feb. 3

Material Deadline Feb. 13



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**Bob Rouse**

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I RECEIVED A WALL CALENDAR in the mail. A printed calendar from a manufacturing company. In a large envelope with stamps. That's only slightly more modern than a triceratops driving up to NTA headquarters in an Edsel.

Don't get me wrong; I *really* like printed, mailed material—magazines, for example. But most of my correspondence comes via email these days. My calendars, too, operate in the electronic realm (magically synced, at that). So the arrival of a ginormous printed calendar delivered by snail mail is an anomaly. But it's a welcome one.

It means that 2017 is really here. I can hold it in my hands. I can turn the pages and see what day my birthday lands on this year. (Easter Sunday, whaddya know?) I can flip through the months and look up family birthdays and anniversaries; I can check on the major holidays. Yep, all the familiar dates are there. And each month is topped with a giant picture of an event or landmark or scene somewhere in the Midwestern U.S.

I hadn't heard of the Lions Club Car Show and Swap Meet in Morris, Illinois (August), nor of the "patriotic bears" standing woodenly along Route 36 in central Missouri (July—natch). But I know about new years.

I know the opportunities they bring. And the hope for happy days and moonlit nights.

2017 will be a big year for NTA. Two editions of Travel Exchange, right? The first one is in St. Louis (as we might have mentioned along the way). You know it's coming, but you're sure to learn some new details—and maybe see some old friends—in the special section starting on page 30. You

can also gather some tips for successful business appointments; four convention veterans pass along advice on page 20.

I'm captivated by the photos of Edinburgh in the City Spotlight, assembled by Gabe Webb, starting on page 26. And the section on the U.S. West that Pat Henderson put together—starting on page 56—makes me want to hop in the car and head out.

Before I go, I'll need to check my new calendar. And if I do drive west, I need to find those Missouri bears holding flags out there on Route 36.

Happy 2017,

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On the cover:
"The Runner" strides in front of the Old Courthouse and the Gateway Arch in downtown St. Louis, site of Travel Exchange '17. The convention preview starts on page 30.
Photo: CC Flickr/Michael Blow:
bit.ly/2goRqK



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HAPPY NEW YEAR! And what a year it will be.

We don't know what to expect from U.S. President-elect Donald Trump and his new administration after the Jan. 20 inauguration. All indications are that it won't be politics as usual. We also don't know what opportunities that'll bring to the table for tourism, but we do know that we'll be ready to work with them at every turn.

I need your help, though, and I want you to be involved. How do you do that? Be a part of Destination Capitol Hill March 28–29 in Washington, D.C. Join your NTA colleagues, along with those from our U.S. Travel and Destination Marketing Association International partners, when we go to Capitol Hill to talk with policymakers and their staffs about the issues important to us. Visit ustravel.org/events/DCH to get signed up.

The events for the 2016 U.S.-China Tourism Year ended with an impressive ceremony at Warner Theatre in Washington, D.C. NTA Board members Jodi Danyluk of Norwegian Cruise Line and Chris Babb from The Group Tour Company joined Catherine Prather and me from the NTA staff to hear from Max Baucus, U.S. ambassador to China; Li Jinzao, chairman of the China National Tourism Administration; and Kelly Craighead, executive director of the U.S. National Travel and Tourism Office.

With the U.S.-China Tourism Year behind us, I want to let you know that our good friend Haybina Hao is stepping

down as NTA's vice president of international development to assess her career and professional goals. She takes with her our support and gratitude.

During Haybina's nearly seven years with NTA, her remarkable skill and energy led our association to a position of prominence in the China-U.S. market. Her can-do attitude and pleasant personality have also made her a much-loved colleague here at NTA headquarters, with our members and throughout the industry.

Haybina will leave big shoes to fill, but her replacement will be stepping onto a solid foundation. Registration in the NTA China Inbound Program is at an all-time high—now numbering 219 tour operators—and our relationships with the U.S. Department of Commerce and the CNTA are stronger than ever.

At the end of 2016, I followed the advice of U.S. Travel's Project: Time Off campaign; my time off included a cruise around the Hawaiian Islands. As incredible as the scenery is, the highlight for me was visiting the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument and remembering all who sacrificed for us at Pearl Harbor so that we can enjoy the freedom we have.

My best for a great 2017!

Pam

Where in the World is COURIER?

While Pam doesn't always use the cover of *Courier* to map out her next vacation, the November issue she read en route to Hawaii hit home at the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument.



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New year's resolution: Renew your NTA membership

It's that time again when we make resolutions for the year ahead to save money, make money, get active and grow professionally. You can check all of these off your list by renewing your NTA membership for 2017. You should've received your invoice in the mail last month, and dues must be returned by Jan. 31.

Among the benefits are online access to a searchable database of NTA members; discounts on products and services; education and market insights through webinars and *Courier* magazine; inclusion in printed and online directories; a chance to serve on an NTA Leadership

advisory group; and of course, attending NTA events such as Travel Exchange and Contact.

"There are many ways to make your membership work for you, and I'm here to help you do it," said Todd Probus, NTA's member solutions manager. "It's more than just attending convention; your NTA membership really is a valuable resource year-round."

To learn more about how to use your membership to the fullest, flip to page 18. If you have any questions about your member benefits, email Todd at todd.probus@ntastaff.com or call +1.859.264.6578.



Todd Probus,
NTA Member Solutions Manager

And the winners are...

The votes are in, and NTA tour operators have selected their top partners as part of the 2017 *Courier*

Distinguished Dozen balloting. This is the sixth edition of the awards program, which recognizes excellence among NTA tour supplier and DMO members in these 12 categories:

- North American DMO Partner (City/Region)
- North American DMO Partner (State/Province)
- Overseas DMO Partner
- Group-friendly Restaurant
- Casino/Gaming Property
- Independent/Boutique Hotel Property
- Corporate Hotel Chain
- Shopping Attraction
- Theater/Show Venue
- Museum for Groups
- Big-ship or River Cruising Company
- Sightseeing Tours

The February issue of *Courier* will include a feature story announcing the gold, silver and bronze winners in each category. Additionally, the 12 gold winners will be recognized during a luncheon on Tuesday, Feb. 28, at Travel Exchange in St. Louis.



ROBB COHEN PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO



UNWTO stats show arrivals growth in 2016

According to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, global tourism arrivals (defined as overnight visitors) remained robust through the first nine months of 2016. Destinations around the world welcomed 956 million international tourists between January and September, which is 34 million more than the same period of 2015 and represents a 4% increase.

Asia and the Pacific led the way with year-over-year international arrivals increasing 9% for the first three quarters, including better than 25% growth in the Republic of Korea, Vietnam and Japan. Higher visitation numbers also were recorded in the other three regions: Africa (up 8%), The Americas (up 7%) and Europe (up 2%).

The majority of source markets saw increases in international tourism expenditures during the first nine months of 2016. China, the world's top source market, reported a double-digit increase in spending (up 19%). The other countries in the top five all reported growth: the United States (second-largest, up 9%), Germany (third, up 5%), the United Kingdom (fourth, up 10%) and France (fifth, up 3%).

To see the final 2016 data, which should be available in March, go to mkt.unwto.org/barometer. ☎



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RELATING TO GOVERNMENT

INSIGHTS ON U.S. LEGISLATIVE ISSUES AND INDUSTRY TOPICS



Investments in travel technology

THE U.S. GOVERNMENT has always played an integral role in the development of emerging technologies, especially those that affect travel. From Thomas Jefferson sending Lewis and Clark to explore westward, to the creation of the Internet, the federal government—through investments, grants, research or its purchasing power—has had a hand in innovations that changed the travel industry.

It is important to note the Obama administration's commitment to technology. In 2015, its Smart Cities Initiative called for an investment of \$45 million in federal research towards safety, transportation, energy and the environment. The administration announced an additional \$80 million for the initiative in 2016, focusing on improving urban transportation, testing connected and autonomous vehicles, forming coalitions to build cleaner communities, and improving travel efficiency and safety.

Other areas of government are also focused on technology and standards that improve travel. Following a recommendation by the 9/11 Commission, Congress passed the REAL ID Act, which established a minimum security standard for state-issued driver's licenses and identification cards. States have made considerable progress in meeting these standards, thus making travel throughout the U.S. safer and more secure.

Another key technological investment that has increased travel safety is the Visa Waiver Program. The VWP enables citizens of participating countries to

spend 90 or fewer days in the U.S. for tourism or business without obtaining a visa. Since its inception in 1986, the program has evolved into a comprehensive security partnership with many of America's closest allies.

Smart Security, a joint program between the Airports Council International and the International Air Transport Association, sets a longer-term vision. The goal is that passengers will be able to enjoy strengthened security and an improved experience as they proceed through security checkpoints with minimal inconvenience.



Although the Trump administration has released few detailed policy plans, the president-elect has stated that he wants to "build the next generation of roads, bridges, railways, tunnels, sea-ports and airports." By his side will be former U.S. Labor Secretary Elaine Chao, who Trump nominated to be the next secretary of transportation. Chao has praised Trump's promise to transform the country's infrastructure, accelerate economic growth and productivity, and create good-paying jobs.

Another key member of the incoming administration is Wilbur Ross, a prominent investor with decades of business experience and a deep understanding of the economy. Nominated to be secretary of commerce, Ross would oversee an agency that's important to the travel industry. Serving as deputy secretary will be Todd Ricketts, the owner of the World Series-winning Chicago Cubs, who recognizes the importance of tourism. Kelly Craighead is another important leader in the Commerce Department. Her position, deputy assistant secretary for travel and tourism, was elevated last month to the deputy level.

The combination of investment experience and appreciation for tourism at the top levels of the Commerce Department presents a unique opportunity for the travel sector to play an important role in federal governance and strategy within the new administration.

The U.S. has come a long way since it first sent explorers into uncharted territory, and despite partisan lines and political bickering, its innovation and investment in travel will continue. Safety systems will improve, infrastructure will continue to change and advance, and the nation, with the help of its government, will continue its exploration of technology and investment in the travel arena. 📍

Signal Group (formerly McBee Strategic), is a Washington, D.C., lobbying firm retained by NTA to advise members about travel-related issues and legislation.

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Forecast for international travel to the United States

BY MARK BROWN,
NATIONAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM OFFICE,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE projects international travel to the United States will continue to experience strong growth through 2021, based on the National Travel and Tourism Office's 2016 Fall Travel Forecast.

According to the current projections, the United States would see annual changes ranging from a small decline to strong growth of nearly five percent. In 2016 volume is expected to decrease 0.9 percent and thus break the string of record-setting years that started in 2010. Volume is expected to resume growing in 2017 and by 2021 the forecasted growth would produce 94.1 million visitors—a 21 percent increase—which would represent more than 16 million additional visitors compared to 2015.

The latest forecast produces a compound annual growth rate over the period of 3.3 percent. This rate is slightly higher than the rate cited in the 2015 Fall Travel Forecast due to stronger growth from Canada, India and Argentina. It is lower, though, than the

4 percent compounded rate reported in *Courier* in the fall of 2014.

Looking at the global travel market, the United Nations World Tourism Organization expects world arrivals to increase around 4 percent over the next several years, producing annual arrivals records. UNWTO's original long-term forecast reset in 2012 called for 1.4 billion world arrivals in 2020 and 1.8 billion arrivals in 2030. However, actual growth in 2013 through 2015 was higher than expected, while 2016 growth will be somewhat lower and more in line with original UNWTO expectations.

Ultimately, much of global growth will result from travel both to and from Asian countries, which have led the world in growth in population, income and—until a few years ago—visitor arrivals. But developed countries, led by Western Europe, have actually topped world-arrivals growth the past three years, including 2016.

Among origin markets, countries with the largest forecasted total growth

Top 10 visitor-origin countries to the U.S.






2015 (visitors)	Rank	2021 (proj. visitors)
 Canada (20,705,000)	1	 Mexico (22,633,000)
 Mexico (18,414,000)	2	 Canada (22,483,000)
 U.K. (4,901,000)	3	 China (5,719,000)
 Japan (3,758,000)	4	 U.K. (5,303,000)
 China (2,591,000)	5	 Japan (3,871,000)
 Germany (2,272,000)	6	 South Korea (2,523,000)
 Brazil (2,219,000)	7	 Germany (2,293,000)
 South Korea (1,765,000)	8	 France (1,991,000)
 France (1,753,000)	9	 Brazil (1,965,000)
 Australia (1,450,000)	10	 India (1,940,000)

percentages are China (121%), India (72%), Argentina (50%), South Korea (43%) and Taiwan (40%).

High growth rates get the greatest media attention, but it's actual travelers who participate in group tours that fill hotel rooms and bus seats. Five countries are expected to account for 64 percent of the projected growth from 2015 through 2021: Mexico (25% of expected total growth), China (19%), Canada (11%), India (5%) and South Korea (5%).

If the 2016 Fall Travel Forecast is realized through 2021, the current top-10 countries will be notably reshuffled. Mexico should surpass Canada in 2016 to attain the top visitor origin market claim, but it may struggle to retain that spot throughout the forecast period. China will become the top overseas-origin market and become the third overall top market behind Mexico and Canada by then end of 2021, pushing both the U.K. and Japan down one slot. Brazil would move from 7th to 9th, while South Korea would rise from 8th to 6th.

Top 5 projected-growth countries

Country	Projected change 2015-21
 China	121%
 India	72%
 Argentina	50%
 South Korea	43%
 Taiwan	40%

India would move into the top 10 for the first time by the end of 2021, nudging Australia outside the top 10 list.

Updated in the spring and fall each year, the NTTO Travel Forecasts are prepared by research staff in the Department of Commerce using economic, demographic, social and marketing factors as well as historical

visitation trends. For more information on the NTTO Travel Forecast, including data tables for the world regions and the top 21 visitor-origin countries, go to bit.ly/2ffgj18.

Mark Brown is an economist at the National Travel and Tourism Office of the International Trade Administration.

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Sharpen or banish in 2017?

BY CATHERINE HEEG



SOCIAL MARKETING evolves quickly, so as we move into a new year, let's consider what researchers—and NTA members—say about what to keep and what to leave behind.

Sharpen these keepers

Video

Ninety percent of online consumers say that seeing a video about a product is helpful in the decision process. For more video marketing stats, visit bit.ly/2g49Cdf.

"Three seconds is all the time we have to engage viewers."

—Jenn Lum Lee,
Main Street Experiences

Research shows that using captions in your video will inspire people to view your video with the audio. Captions can also get your point across if viewers don't click to play.

Tip: Creating video content can be as simple as highlighting a destination, a new tour or even the announcement of your latest tour book.

Social advertising

A key way to begin a social relationship with potential clients is through Facebook's Custom Audiences, which targets visitors to your website and matches them with people on Facebook. And with Power Editor on Facebook, you can create ads that are based on a variety of criteria, such as the Facebook pages they like, their zip codes and even adult beverages they enjoy.

Another tool to help you craft content—and find targets—for your ads is Audience Insights, which lets you identify potential customers based on demographics, purchase behavior, field of work and more.

"Social ads certainly do increase post reach and page likes, but it can be difficult to make the connection to new business."

—Taunya Wolfe Finn,
Wolfe Adventures & Tours

KEEPERS FOR 2017

Video



Social ads



Analytics



Graphics



Tip: In our world of noisy information, things like strategic ad placement, compelling content and successful tracking are more important than ever. Having more eyeballs on your content addresses the marketing Rule of Seven—the number of times a prospective buyer must see your message to become a client.

Analytics and metrics

Closely tied to your social ad campaigns are analytics and metrics, and they also play a big part in the tone, style and timing of your communication. When you dive into Google Analytics, social accounts and e-blast dashboards, you'll be able to better understand what appeals to your clients.

Tip: Tapping into the data about your fans' content, types of posts (video, photos, quotes, links, etc.) and times of interaction provide you a roadmap for future engagement.

"We have found success by focusing on client experiences and incorporating user-generated content into our social media."

—Justin Osbon, Image Tours

Graphics

The power of visual marketing continues to grow as savvy marketers create more attention-grabbing graphic posts. Fifty-five percent of marketers plan to prioritize creating visual content, according to the Content Marketing Institute. Embrace your inner artist and have fun getting creative.

Tip: Here are some of my favorite tools:

1. PicMonkey
2. Canva
3. Photoshop
4. Picasa
5. Pixlr

Banish these habits!

Too many hashtags (#Overkill)

Do you ever have trouble finding the content of a post because of all the hashtags?

Tip: One to three hashtags per post is best.

"When I sent hashtags to folks to use on tour, they never got used. So we won't worry so much about hashtags for groups."

—Taunya Wolfe Finn,
Wolfe Adventures & Tours

Too active

As part of a joint study with NTA and George Washington University, I found that the three most popular social platforms for NTA members are Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. With this in mind, you can also survey your clients to pinpoint where they hang out socially.

"We most certainly plan to add Twitter into the mix in 2017."

—Patti Culp, Alabama Travel Council

Engaged in 2017

Social marketing is relationship building and brand awareness at its finest. Keeping the "social" in social marketing is the foundation of a successful strategy. As Jenn Lum Lee says, "It's more about engaging than selling."

How will you engage in 2017? What will you keep ... and what will you banish? ☞

Catherine Heeg, international speaker and trainer, focuses on social media marketing strategies for the tourism and hospitality industry. An NTA presenter since 2009, she understands members and their businesses. Connect with her socially and at cmsspeaking.com.

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PHOTO BY JAM VANDERKAM



2015 scholarship students pose with several mentors Travel Exchange in New Orleans.

Mentoring with Tourism Cares

BY ELLAINE DEEKEN

YOU REMEMBER that feeling. You face the big room of strangers, a plate of food in hand, looking for a place to sit. No, it's not the high school cafeteria. It's your first travel conference, and you're the new kid. You don't know a single person because you're just starting out in the industry, and you're hoping that you'll meet someone who can show you the ropes at Travel Exchange—and beyond.

If you're lucky, you've had at least one good mentor in your life who has encouraged and guided you during your career. In this day and age, finding a mentor isn't easy: Travel professionals are busy and constantly on the go; it can be difficult for both mentors and mentees to carve out the time; and of course the mentors with the most to offer always seem to be the busiest!

Fortunately, Tourism Cares students have an opportunity to shadow the wise veterans of the industry at Travel Exchange. The Bruce Beckham Scholarship Fund NTA Mentoring Program exposes college students to the wide range of career opportunities available in the travel, tourism, and hospitality industries by helping them establish professional networks. This year, 16 eager scholarship winners will be assigned a mentor who they will shadow during business appointments at the conference.

"I would love to learn more about the day-to-day activities of professionals in the hospitality field," says 2017 mentee Jordan Bacon. "I hope to improve my communication and networking skills as well."

While the majority of the students are fresh out of school, not all of them

are just starting out. Kyle Anderson is entering his next career after serving in the United States Marine Corps. "I really would like to meet someone in the industry that would not mind mentoring an older man who happens to be trying to achieve his lifelong dream."

What do mentors get out of it? "There's something exciting about seeing NTA's Travel Exchange through the eyes of someone new to the event," says Kevin Murphy, general manager of Sports Leisure Vacations. "There is nothing more rewarding than seeing that student later in life working in the industry."

Julie Kozikowski of Destinations Unlimited is one of those students who has become a mentor. She is a past scholarship winner and says that her participation in the mentoring program changed the course of her career. "I volunteer each year to pay it forward to the future of our industry."

Students at Travel Exchange will attend appointment sessions and engage in an active student educational panel, as well as join in on the evening networking events. At Monday night's opening party, this year's students will be wearing shirts with their school name on them. They'll face the big group of strangers ... a plate of food in hand ... looking for somewhere to sit.

Even if you haven't signed up to mentor, you can be that friendly face. Pay it forward. If you want to be a mentor and be matched with students, it's not too late; email trish.kelly@tourismcares.com. ☘



Students shadow mentors during business appointments at Travel Exchange.

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10 Ways NTA[®]

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Renew by Jan. 31 to keep your benefits for 2017

1 Use your online member profile. Check and update your profile often at NTAonline.com. A healthy profile is key to success in the association. It is what potential business partners see both when seeking appointments at Travel Exchange and when accessing the member directory year-round.

2 Search for leads in our member database. Accessible 24/7 on NTAonline.com, this feature is used nearly 8,000 times a month. Find potential business partners and download search results for great lead lists.

3 Make plans now to attend Travel Exchange '17. Join us at Travel Exchange in St. Louis (Feb. 26–March 2) and San Antonio (Dec. 14–18) in 2017 as our convention moves to fourth-quarter dates. And if you attend in St. Louis, you'll save 50% on reg fees for San Antonio if you sign up by July 14. Visit NTA Online to get all the details. Use #TREX17 on social media.

4 Register for Contact '18. Travel buyers, this is your chance to gather in historical Charleston, South Carolina, April 19–21, 2018, for three days of operator-to-operator partnering and in-depth education. Sellers can attend as sponsors—visit NTA Online for more information. Registration opens Dec. 14, 2017. Use #NTAcontact on social media.

5 Join us on Capitol Hill. Join NTA, U.S. Travel Association and DMAI in Washington, D.C., March 28–29 for Destination Capitol Hill to support our advocacy efforts. Meet your colleagues from across the United States and visit with members of Congress, learn about upcoming travel legislation, and mingle with key influencers and travel pros.

6 Connect with NTA on social media. Tap into NTA's social media and watch your professional network grow. See yourself and your friends at our events, get instant updates on the many goings-on including important dates and deadline reminders. Connect with us on our social media channels:



7 Save Money with NTA's Corporate

Partners. ADP, AFEX, Aon, American Express, Chase, Staples, UPS and Luggage Forward partner with NTA to help you save money. Get great rates on everything from insurance to office supplies. The money saved with these discounts could pay for your membership.

8 Get educated. Stay in the know and on top of industry trends with our education and research. NTA publishes *Courier* magazine and the *Trip Planner* series, sends the *Tuesday* e-newsletter, compiles Travel Market Guides, conducts webinars, provides audio recordings of past NTA events and produces relevant sessions that provide bottom-line results. Content ranges from conversations with NTA leaders and industry trends to marketing and day-to-day business management. Watch your inbox and social media for invites to upcoming webinars. You can check out past webinars at NTAonline.com in the Education section.



9 Hit a Meet-up. NTA brings its show on the road throughout the year with local gatherings of tourism professionals we call Meet-ups. These town hall-style meetings of current and potential members educate attendees on industry trends and updates, what's happening with your association and how to make the most of your membership. Watch for cities and dates in your *Tuesday* e-newsletter.

10 Experience NTA's diversity. NTA is focused on travel to, from and within North America, and our tour operators are some of the most diverse buyers in the industry. These companies, which collectively move nearly 15 million travelers and do over \$10.5 billion in sales per year, are packaging travel in markets such as faith, adventure, culinary, student, cruising, China inbound and Hispanic.



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An appointment with density

BY BOB ROUSE

Business appointments at Travel Exchange are not to be entered into lightly, according to these experienced members. While you likely have your own strategies for maximizing your appointments, take a minute to see how others do it. We talked to four people who represent different membership types and geographic regions.



Pam Williams
Huntsville/Madison
County CVB
Huntsville, Alabama



Christian Utpatel
Terra Lu Travel &
Consult GmbH
Homburg, Germany



Tom Jaffa
Jaffa Travel &
Receptive Services
Seattle, Washington



Chantal Cardinal
Atlific Hotels
Montréal, Québec



rapport that begins in a business appointment can be nurtured at meals and social events.

We often hear it takes three years of attending Travel Exchange for suppliers and DMOs to earn the trust—and business—of tour operators. Is that true? And are there ways to build relationships faster?

Williams: It's true, but it is not necessarily a negative thing. Operators generally work 12 months or more in advance to create and publish tours. If you are a destination that is new to them, it takes a few face-to-face meetings to encourage them to include your location and activities. Following up and providing exactly what you promise are essential to building that rapport.

Utpatel: This is very true. It was exactly at my fourth TREX that I took the first serious business home to Germany. There might be a way to build relationships faster, but I didn't find it. It's all about ongoing contacts.

Jaffa: As tour operators, we are responsible for the well-being of each passenger and for the quality of their experience. Our reputations (and liability) are in the hands of those providing the services at each venue of the tour, so we need to have confidence in the partners we select. Many of my choices of destinations and suppliers are based upon my confidence in those who represent them, and trust takes time to build.

Relationships take time to forge.

Cardinal: It definitely takes a few meetings before you see the first booking—unless the tour operator is desperate. Seven minutes is fast, and you need more time to get to know each other. To build relationships faster, follow up and make face-to-face visits when possible. If that's not possible, you can always use Skype.

What's the best way to turn around a seemingly mismatched appointment to gain something from it?

Utpatel: I remember one appointment where we both had no idea what brought us together. Our markets and products were totally different. But I gave my regular speech, we had a fun time and I found out that my new colleague had heritage connections to Germany. We keep in contact, and, who knows: Maybe one day he will bring a group to Germany. Of course it's best

to match appointments perfectly, and this starts at home. The appointment system puts all my appointments on one day, so it's important to fill the open spots and other days with additional appointments that I make before leaving for TREX.

Jaffa: You can learn from any interaction, and over the years I have experienced business coming from the most unlikely situations. Focus on building the relationship and finding common interests. Project enthusiasm and interest. Folks like to offer advice, so you might ask, "If you were me trying to promote my organization, what might you do?" Or: "Do you have any input about my presentation?"

"Based on your research, your sales speech should emphasize what is important to the tour operator."

—Chantal Cardinal

Cardinal: If the operator is not coming to your area, not much can be done. However, you can ask why they are not coming to your town. Have they been? Do they know it well? Sometimes, before selling your hotel, you need to sell the destination. If the product is not what they are looking for, you thank them for their time and go. It's not good to drag out a meeting for nothing.

Williams: As a DMO, we consider everyone a potential visitor who can enjoy the experiences only available in Huntsville, Alabama. So if an appointment at Travel Exchange is a mismatch for an operator's group business, I try to have a conversation to encourage them to visit personally with family and friends.

What other tips do you have that can help members make the most of their business appointments at Travel Exchange?

Cardinal: Be prepared. Know everything the tour operators do: Where are they are going? And if they package your city, where are they staying and what are they doing? Often, you lose a lot of time trying to get to know the company

when you can find most of the information on the internet or their online profile. Based on your research, your sales speech should emphasize what is important to the tour operator. If you see that all of their hotels are downtown, you should emphasize the fact that you are downtown. (If you are, of course!) And then mention what attractions are close to the hotel.

Utpatel: You have seven minutes to present yourself and what you have to offer. With walking, welcome, introduction and good-bye, it leaves three to four minutes for your actual presentation. The only path to success is to stay focused and not waste time with anything else. Get rid of your coat; don't carry it around. Drink your coffee before going to the appointment. Have your handouts handy. Smile.

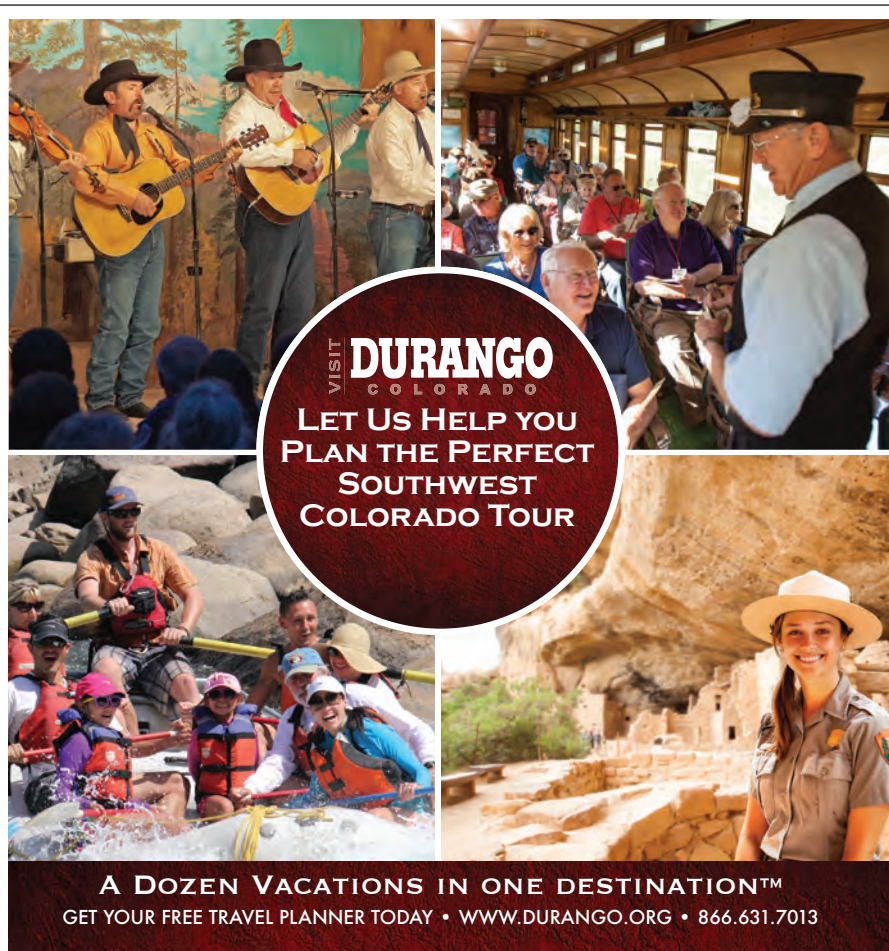
Jaffa: Do your homework and understand the tour operators' needs the best you can. Ask questions and build rapport. Personalize your pitch and follow up. Make the most of the wonderful

opportunities NTA provides, and remember to seize the opportunity: When you meet folks, try to make a good impression and exchange business cards, whether it's in an appointment, at a seminar, on the coach or at a social event. Listen, make notes and find ways to connect.

"You can learn from any interaction, and over the years I have experienced business coming from the most unlikely situations."

—Tom Jaffa

Williams: Do your research and ask a question or two about their business so that you may tailor your sales pitch. This saves time (and embarrassment) and helps create a more authentic conversation that could continue after the appointment and into networking events. ☛



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FSAF.ORG/GREG MARTIN PHOTOGRAPHY

Alaska's alluring arts

Little did the organizers of Jazz Festival '80 realize that their week-long musical celebration would eventually blossom into one of Alaska's top creative arts events, the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival.

The multifaceted festival, which will take place July 16–30, brings a broad spectrum of artists to the area for concerts, performances, workshops and classes. Across the two weeks, attendees can take part in programming that showcases music, dance, theater, comedy, writing, the culinary world, the healing arts and more.

One of the unique aspects of the event is the role the workshops and classes play in reaching its mission of further engaging participants—both by nurturing their artistic abilities and by fostering a deeper appreciation of the arts. To accomplish that, hundreds of educational seminars are offered, ranging from one-hour sessions to full-day and multi-day options.

The performances feature both internationally renowned entertainers and top local artists. Special culinary events also are held, including the popular Taste of Festival night.

Call +1.907.474.8869 or visit fsaf.org to find out more.

Boston's 19th-century revolutionaries

The Boston African American National Historic Site showcases the rich history of the city's African-American community during the 1800s. Centered on the north slope of Beacon Hill in downtown Boston, one particular neighborhood gave rise to a number of leaders of the city and nation's fight against slavery and injustice.

During a visit to this National Park Service site, travelers can learn more about these courageous men and women who championed the abolition movement, the Civil War, the Underground Railroad and other causes related to equal rights and educational opportunities for African Americans.

Visitors can follow the Black Heritage Trail, which connects 14 significant attractions around Beacon Hill. Along the trail, park rangers offer narration about places such as the Robert Gould Shaw and 54th Regiment Memorial, the George Middleton House, Abiel Smith School and the African Meeting House.

Throughout the year, seminars and other special programs are offered on a variety of topics related to the African American movement from the 19th century to the present.

To learn more, go to nps.gov/boaf or call +1.617.742.5415.



BOAF

Signing on for science

The Kentucky Science Center in downtown Louisville brings the vast world of science to life through interactive displays, learning centers, and movies that are shown on a four-story-high screen. The museum has four exhibit experiences that touch on different aspects of how science impacts daily life:

The World Around Us covers natural and earth science through displays centered on the themes of air, water and the environment.

The World Within Us focuses on our bodies. How does your voice work? How large is your large intestine? These and other questions are explored.

World We Create takes a look at how advances in science impact the worlds of physics, engineering, architecture, manufacturing, transportation and communication.

Science in Play was especially designed for youth. The area includes many hands-on learning stations, such as one where you can design your own roller coaster.

Student groups are the focus of a number of the attraction's themed activities, which range from summer camps and overnight experiences to programs for Boy Scout and Girl Scout groups that meet specific Scout requirements and provide volunteer service opportunities.

For more information, visit kysciencecenter.org or call +1.502.561.6100. 📞



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ARIZONA

FULL OF FIRSTS

BY ANNA PETTUS

I WAS A NEWBIE to the U.S. Southwest when I tagged along with a group of NTA tour operators on the Arizona Product Development Trip in November. I experienced many “firsts” throughout the week:

- My first time to see a cactus in the wild (I have now seen hundreds.)
- First time eating a date (It’s a fruit, so naturally I preferred mine wrapped in bacon.)
- First time tasting a prickly pear margarita (also my second time, third time, fourth time ... just kidding, kind of)
- My first time meeting the group of operators I explored Arizona with (my favorite “first”)

First stop: Tucson

I had never been to a desert before, and Tucson at times felt worlds away from my hometown in Kentucky. Instead of green hills, there are huge, red mountains and prickly, towering cacti. I remember looking out the window of our bus that first day with my mouth hanging open as Brooke Hamlett of Visit Tucson was saying, “Yeah, this is when it starts to kind of look like we’re on a different planet.”

We were on our way to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, and I had plenty more “you’re not in Kentucky anymore” moments in store.

Although the word “museum” is right there in its name, the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum felt much more like a zoo. We navigated winding paths through desert plant life and animals with a tour guide, who taught us tidbits about our surroundings that, on our own, we would have passed right by.

For instance, at one point he led us up to a bush and instructed us to pluck some leaves off, cup them in our hands

Nicole Krekeler of Experience Scottsdale (left) and NTA’s Anna Pettus take the mannequin challenge at Scottsdale’s Museum of the West.

and blow. The result was a pleasant scent, which reminds the locals of how the desert smells after a good rain. Rain is a rarity in Tucson.

Regardless of rainfall, Tucson was the first U.S. city to be designated a UNESCO World City of Gastronomy. It's no surprise that I was full the whole time we were there.

"For a tour operator specializing in agriculture, Tucson's recognition as a World City of Gastronomy is a huge selling point," said Kaitlin Richards of Trump Tours. "The food is fantastic. It definitely lives up to its title."

We enjoyed our first meal of the trip at Downtown Kitchen and Cocktails, where my tour operator friends were pleased to learn that the chef offers group cooking classes.

I was pleased to learn that jalapeño-infused chocolate ice cream exists. And it's delicious.

Next stop: Yuma

Situated on the border of Arizona, California and Mexico, Yuma boasts the title of "the sunniest place on Earth." We spent the majority of our time here outdoors, soaking in that famous sunshine, first on a kayak floating down the Gila River and then while walking in between rows and rows of fresh produce.

It wasn't just the sunshine that was warm, though; the people of Yuma are extremely friendly folk. They're also very passionate, and it was so fun to learn (and taste) how agriculturally important Yuma is to the world. During the winter months, the Yuma area



ANNA PETTUS

Jalapeño-infused chocolate ice cream



PDT participants at the University of Arizona Agricultural Center (l to r): Stephanie Dilling, Wells Gray Tours; Dana Bear, Sun Tours; Michael Mishko, Creative Tours Florida; Shelley Thiessen, Sun Fun Tours; Tamara Johnson, Sunshine Travel Company; Anna Pettus, NTA; Scott Dunn, Arizona Office of Tourism; Kaitlin Richards, Trump Tours; Joseph Moore Jr., Applesseed Expeditions.

supplies about 90 percent of the leafy vegetables consumed in the U.S.

We learned this and other fun facts on our "field-to-feast" tour, which began at the University of Arizona Agricultural Center. Our visit there included time in a field with a Yuma grower, where we learned how a desert is able to be a leading agricultural area. The answer: an irrigation system fed by the Colorado River.

Afterward we were treated to—you guessed it: more food. Locally grown, of course.

Leafy vegetables aren't all Yuma is known for. As mentioned above, I had my very first date fruit here. Actually, I had an entire meal made with them during our "Date Night" in Yuma.

As date novices, we learned much about how dates are grown, harvested and eaten. We ate our date dinner outside under the stars while a guitarist strummed peaceful background music to accompany our chatter. It was the best date I've ever had.

Final stop: Scottsdale

As much fun as we were having in Yuma, hearing that it was time to head to the Musical Instrument Museum in Scottsdale was (ahem) music to my ears.

Housing more than 6,000 musical instruments and objects from around

the world and throughout history, the MIM is an extremely cultural and colorful place. Instruments are organized geographically, so we walked from country to country with headphones, listening to the music of people from across the globe and in our own backyard.

"The MIM is a world-class music museum, and I think every one of my school directors would love to take their students there," said Tamara Johnson of the Sunshine Travel Company. "We were there two hours, but I could have stayed the whole day."

I, too, could have stayed all day, but I was content to leave knowing I had found the piano John Lennon used to compose his hit song "Imagine."

We ended our trip in Arizona the perfect way, by boarding the Desert Belle Tour Boat and coasting across Saguaro Lake, drinking in the scenery during our last evening in the desert. Kicked back in the moonlight, we sailed past many cacti and even spotted a bighorn sheep looking down at us from a cliff.

My first trip to Arizona was a cultural, gastronomic and sensory success. That's why it won't be my last.

Anna Pettus is communication and marketing coordinator at NTA. To see more photos, turn to page 73.

Edinburgh, Scotland

COMPILED BY GABE WEBB



Skara Brae

Scotland's capital city is well over a thousand years old, and its long history means travelers have a plethora of historical and heritage sites to visit. The city today is a place of vibrant, multicultural festivals and attractions that have a heart for the past and an eye toward the future. Here are 10 new developments and updated favorites to look for in Edinburgh in 2017 and beyond.

To learn more about Edinburgh, contact Maggie Anderson, VisitScotland's assistant market manager for North America and Australasia at maggie.anderson@visitscotland.com or go to visitscotlandtraveltrade.com.

1 The Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology 2017

"Our Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology will celebrate the richness of Scotland's tangible and intangible heritage—our buildings, visitor attractions and archaeological sites, as well as our diverse stories, traditions and culture," says Maggie Anderson of VisitScotland. Travelers can explore Scotland's Castle Trail or the Highland Pictish Trail to learn about the country's past. They can hear the songs of Scotland's musical heritage at the Hebridean Celtic Festival (July 19–22) or Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival (Aug. 3–5). The neolithic village of Skara Brae is a top archaeological site.

2 Military Tattoo

The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo is an annual series of performances of military bands from the U.K. and the Commonwealth. The 2017 event (Aug. 4–26) is themed "A Splash of Tartan."

"It is designed to offer an opportunity to celebrate the clan network as an enduring link between those that live abroad and those that remain at home, and connected with the Scottish Diaspora," says Anderson. Each evening will spotlight a specific clan. "We are hoping that U.S. visitors with Scottish ancestry will come to Scotland, explore their ancestry and visit [the tattoo] the evening that their clan is highlighted."



PHOTOS: VISITSCOTLAND



Melrose Abbey

3 Borders Railway

In 2015 the Queen opened the Borders Railway, which connected Edinburgh and the Scottish Borders region by train for the first time since 1969. The 45-minute ride makes attractions such as Rosslyn Chapel, Abbotsford House, Melrose Abbey and the National Mining Museum more easily reachable. “Each year in August and September, there will be steam train trips running on the weekend,” in addition to conventional trains year-round, says Anderson. “New to this service, which is great to know for tour operators, is a bus that runs from the train stations to some of the best tourist attractions in the Scottish Borders area.”

4 New Hotels

Edinburgh’s popular festivals can lead to difficulties with finding lodging during peak travel seasons. “We are delighted to say that there have been new hotel developments in 2016, and there are more scheduled for the coming years,” says Anderson. Here’s a look at soon-to-open properties:

- Aparthotel Adagio Edinburgh New Waverley (2017)
- Hampton by Hilton Edinburgh City Centre (2017)
- SACO Aparthotel Edinburgh George Street & Queen Street (2017)
- Carlton Edinburgh (2018)
- Leonardo Hotel Edinburgh (2018)

5 Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2017

The renowned Edinburgh Festival Fringe (Aug. 4–28) celebrates performance in all forms and draws internationally recognized acts and emerging talent. “The Fringe started when eight theater groups turned up and performed at the Edinburgh International Festival,” says Anderson. “Despite

not being invited they went ahead and staged their shows on the ‘fringe of the festival’ anyway.” The nearly month-long celebration is the largest of its kind in the world, and the 2016 event included more than 50,000 performances of nearly 3,300 shows. Tickets for individual performances go on sale in early February, and shows will be added well into the spring.

6 A Year of Young People (2018)

“A program of cultural and educational events and activities, co-designed with young people themselves, will be held across the country in 2018 and will celebrate Scotland as a great place to grow up and mark young people’s important contribution to Scottish Society,” says Anderson. The year’s activities will highlight enterprise, regeneration, education and equality. “For the U.S. market, we are focusing on product for educational and performance groups,” says Anderson, adding that many universities offer accommodations to these groups. Edinburgh First (edinburghfirst.co.uk/for-accommodation) is a helpful organization for finding lodging.



Fire breathing at Edinburgh Festival Fringe

7 Soul of Scotland Tours

“Soul of Scotland Tours—for those operators interested in faith-based travel—is a family tour business that specializes in Edinburgh’s extraordinary Christian heritage,” says Anderson. On a two-hour, faith-focused walking tour, guests are led by a guide in character as a medieval monk who details the contributions of significant historical figures, including Scottish Reformation leader John Knox. The tour also visits St. Giles’ Cathedral, Greyfriars’ Kirk and St. Columba’s Free Church—all along the city’s Royal Mile. soulofscotlandtours.com

8 The Scotch Whisky Experience

Scotland’s signature spirit is the focus of the Scotch Whisky Experience, a replica distillery that teaches visitors about the country’s distinct whisky-producing regions and the process of making the spirit, as well as giving them an appreciation for its flavors and aromas. Tour options range from one to three hours and can include tastings of traditional Scottish foods. Groups can also visit the nearby Glenkinchie Distillery, 30 minutes from Edinburgh. Glenkinchie can customize group tours and help arrange transportation from the city.

9 International Festival

The festival (Aug. 4–28) brings dance, theater, opera and music from around the world to Edinburgh for more than three weeks of innovative performances. Programs range from massive public spectacles and fireworks displays to educational workshops and seminars.



10 Nearby stops for hub-and-spoke tours

“Scotland is not a huge country, and a lot of things are within a one-hour drive from Edinburgh. If you expand to two hours, you will be able to cover a whole lot of the country,” says Anderson. Consider these other tour stops:

Glasgow, Scotland’s largest city, is only an hour away by car or train. “It has a completely different feel from Edinburgh and is renowned for its culture, style and friendly people.”

St. Andrews is a small town known for its ancient university and golf history. “Visitors can explore the St. Andrews castle and the golf museum, or walk along the famous Old Course.”

Dundee is a UNESCO City of Design, and in 2018 it will welcome the V&A, the first design museum in the U.K. outside of London. 📍



St. Giles' Cathedral



Scotch Whisky Experience

2017 IS SURE TO PULL THE VISITORS IN.

NTA TRAVEL EXCHANGE '17

If you are looking to build Scotland product, don't miss meeting Maggie Anderson, VisitScotland's trade specialist, in St. Louis.



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SCOTLAND'S YEAR OF HISTORY, HERITAGE AND ARCHAEOLOGY

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HISTORY
HERITAGE &
ARCHAEOLOGY

• 2017 •



VERARCHING GOAL

**Iconic St. Louis sites—plus essential events
and people—await Travel Exchange delegates**

Judy Garland crooned, “Meet Me in St. Louis,” in the title song of a 1944 film. The movie, about the 1904 World’s Fair, might seem like ancient history. And at the rate St. Louis is changing, we’ll see a new city when we meet there for Travel Exchange.

“Even if you visited St. Louis just two years ago, we have a whole new destination waiting to be discovered,” says Renee Eichelberger of Explore St. Louis. “Our city has experienced a transformation the past couple of years, with new attractions, restaurants and entertainment options for all types of visitors.”

NTA delegates will gain business at the convention, but they’ll also gain a new appreciation for a city that Eichelberger is eager to show off. “What I’m most looking

forward to about hosting the NTA convention is welcoming my NTA family to the city I love and care so much about.”

Some of the newest attractions are the sites of Travel Exchange events: the National Blues Museum in the heart of downtown, Ballpark Village and the Anheuser-Busch Brewery Tour Center.

But that’s where you’ll be at night. Your St. Louis days will be filled with rewarding appointments, informative seminars, entertaining meal events and engaging conversations with colleagues. That’s all described on the following pages.

In the song, Garland promised we’ll “dance the hoochee koochee,” and she’ll “be your tootsie wootsie.”

For now, let’s just leave it at “Meet Me in St. Louis.”



SCHEDULE

Sunday Feb. 26	Monday Feb. 27	Tuesday Feb. 28	Wednesday March 1	Thursday March 2
Tour Operator Day	Destination Pavilion DMO Appointments		Supplier Exchange Tour Supplier Appointments	
	Opening Ceremony and Full Breakfast	Grab and Go Breakfast	Government Relations Breakfast Bistro <i>Sponsored by The Group Tour Company</i>	Grab and Go Breakfast
Sightseeing Tours <i>Sponsored by Explore St. Louis</i>	NTA Annual Business Meeting and Talk Time Education Sessions	DMO Prescheduled Appointments Education Sessions	Tour Supplier Prescheduled Appointments Education Sessions	Tour Supplier Prescheduled Appointments Education Sessions
Lunch on your own	NYC Center Stage Luncheon <i>Sponsored by Broadway Inbound and NYC & Company</i>	Luncheon <i>Sponsored by The Soundtrack of America. Made in Tennessee.</i> Distinguished Dozen Awards <i>Presented by Courier magazine</i>	Luncheon <i>Sponsored by Norwegian Cruise Line</i>	NTA Celebration Luncheon <i>Sponsored by Mexico Tourism Board</i>
Education Sessions	DMO Prescheduled Appointments Education Sessions	DMO Prescheduled Appointments Education Sessions	Tour Supplier Prescheduled Appointments Education Sessions	Tour Supplier Prescheduled Appointments Education Sessions
Icebreaker at City Museum <i>Sponsored by Explore St. Louis</i>	NTA Opening Day Party at Ballpark Village <i>Sponsored by Ballpark Village</i>	Happy Hour <i>Sponsored by Aon Affinity and Hilmar Cheese Company Visitor Center</i> Dine-around	Hispanic Travel Market Fiesta <i>Sponsored by Norwegian Cruise Line</i> Dine-around	Closing Night Party at Anheuser-Busch <i>Sponsored by Budweiser Brewery Experience</i>

FACING PAGE: BOTTOM GROUP; CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ROBB COHEN PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO, CC FLOCKR/BILL MORROW; bit.ly/7TUQDFG, ROBB COHEN PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO, EXPLORE ST. LOUIS, CC FLOCKR/PHILIP LEARA; bit.ly/2g6HS8z

BEFORE YOU GO

Best advice for business appointments

Business happens on and off the Travel Exchange floor, and what better time to make new connections than while you are having fun? Whether it's a night out or helping a good cause, you'll get to know potential business partners and the host city.

Prescheduled Appointments: Research pays off

NTA's online request system enables you to develop a list of the companies you hope to meet with during your business appointments, and it provides information on appointment-taking attendees. Appointment scheduling opened Dec. 6, and you have until Jan. 27 to finalize and submit your appointment requests. After the system does the matching, you'll receive your list of meetings by email on Feb. 14. (Think of it as Valentine's Day matchmaking.)

Direct request scheduling: Your first follow-up

After you receive your appointment schedule, you can add more meetings before you arrive in St. Louis by using the same online request system. Reach out to colleagues who have the same open time slots as you and see if you can schedule a meeting. Each request that's accepted will be automatically added to your schedule—and theirs. Direct request scheduling closes Feb. 24.



More appointments: Work the floor

We'll give you a shopping list. On it are the companies you missed getting a prescheduled appointment with, and those are the members you can seek out on-site. (Download the list from your posted appointment schedule). Your best option is while tour operators are seated during the Supplier Exchange. Approach a company's representative who is not engaged in a meeting and ask if you can schedule an appointment during a time you both have open. If one's not available, you can introduce yourself and leave your profile form and business card—and chat with them later at a meal or social function.

Need an intro—or refresher—course?

NTAonline.com contains everything you need, ranging from the full schedule and information on seminars and evening events to tips from convention veterans and helpful links. For instance, you can listen to an audio recording of the Travel Exchange 101 webinar, conducted Dec. 1, and find links to seminars from previous conventions at NTAonline.com/education.

The Travel Exchange First-timers page (NTAonline.com/travel-exchange-first-timers), features tips from members who were Travel Exchange newcomers last year in Atlanta, as well as information on this year's Travel Exchange Ambassadors. If you

have a question as you get ready for St. Louis, you can reach out directly to any of the veteran NTA members in this group for peer-to-peer advice about the show. Photos and bios of each of the following ambassadors are available on that page:

Jim Coggin, Virginia Beach Convention & Visitor Bureau

Laura Elkin, Crescent Hotels & Resorts

Scott Hartcorn, Shilo Inns Suites Hotels

Melody Johnson, Falcon's Crest

John Shaffer, Luray Caverns

Mindy Shea, Visit Savannah

Suzanne Slavitter,

Sports Empire & Authentic California Vacations

Christian Utpatel, Terra Lu Travel & Consult GmbH

Michael Weinberg, Hiltons of Chicago

Clayton Whitehead, Sports Leisure Vacations



And don't miss the **Travel Exchange 101** seminar and tour of the convention floor once you arrive in St. Louis. This session, which will be offered Sunday at 3:15 and Tuesday at 3:30, will be followed by a convention floor tour to help you get the lay of the land.

Badlands National Park



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Tours of the Capitol building, memorials, Governor's mansion, Trail of Governors and the Oahe Dam are available. The Pierre area offers a plethora of outdoor recreation and museums to visit.



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GROUP TOUR PLANNING ASSISTANCE

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South Dakota Department of Tourism
www.TourSDakota.com
vicky.engelhaupt@travelsouthdakota.com
800-952-3625

South Dakota

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

Make connections and help out: Volunteer

Volunteering at Travel Exchange is a big help to your association, and it also gives you another way to meet more members. See if there's a role for you as a volunteer:

Registration Assistant Work at the registration counter, and you'll get to greet members when they first arrive. Along with helping pass out badges and registration bags, you will answer questions as people check in.

Seminar Monitor You'll be a VIP when your role in the room is to greet, assist and even introduce the featured speaker.

Tourism Cares Student Mentor Share your knowledge and experiences by allowing a student to shadow you during your appointments. Tourism Cares is seeking mentors for its scholarship recipients who will attend Travel Exchange in St. Louis.

Greeter You can provide a morning welcome—and a copy of the *Travel Exchange Daily* newsletter—to your fellow members as they enter the convention hall.

To become a volunteer at Travel Exchange '17, email headquarters@ntaonline.com.



'Because I'm app-y'

One of the best tools for staying in the know is right in your pocket or purse: the Travel Exchange '17 mobile app on your smartphone. Convention-goers will receive a personal invitation via email before the show with details on how to download and log into the app. It contains tons of information on the event:

- The full schedule
- Your personalized schedule of business appointments
- A list of event registrants with complete contact information
- Maps of the exchange floor and convention center
- An NTA sponsor list with contact information
- A push notification function that will deliver announcements and schedule changes
- An interactive chatter function so you can see what your peers are saying on social media—use #TREX17 to stay connected!



The Travel Exchange '17 mobile app can be accessed with a web browser and through your smartphone or tablet. The app is compatible with the iPhone, iPad (requires iOS 8 or later) and Android devices (requires Android 4 and above). To download the app, search for "Travel Exchange '17" on the iTunes App Store or on Google Play. If you have questions, email headquarters@ntaonline.com.

WHILE YOU'RE THERE

Learn about St. Louis on Fam trips and sightseeing tours

Sightseeing tours

You are invited to explore St. Louis on Sunday, Feb. 26. All tours depart America's Center, the site of Travel Exchange, at 9 a.m. To register and read complete descriptions of the sightseeing tours, visit NTAonline.com/convention and click on "Sightseeing Tours" in the full schedule. The ☁️ symbol indicates that at least part of the tour is outdoors, and participants should dress for the weather.

Forest Park: "Meet Me in St. Louis"

This itinerary begins with a driving overview of Forest Park. Your motorcoach will shuttle between the Saint Louis Zoo, the Saint Louis Art Museum and the Jewel Box. Although the shuttle will run between all three attractions, we recommend that you select one attraction to focus on in order to make the most of your experience. A boxed lunch is included for the drive back to America's Center. ☁️

The Grand Tour

This tour includes a private tour at The Fabulous Fox Theatre, a drive by the New Cathedral and a stop at the Missouri Botanical Gardens. A lunch voucher for Sassafras Café at the Missouri Botanical Gardens is included. ☁️

Baseball, Brew & Blues **FULL**

This itinerary includes a tour of Busch Stadium, a tour of Anheuser-Busch Brewery and admission to the National Blues Museum. A lunch voucher to Sugarfire Smokehouse BBQ is included. ☁️

A Little Taste of St. Louis

This driving tour includes an overview of The Loop, Soulard and Lafayette Square, and a stop at Ted Drewes Frozen Custard (pending seasonal hours). Treats include Fitz's Root Beer, Chocolate Chocolate Chocolate Arch, Gus' Pretzels and Googie Butter Cake.



Ted Drewes Frozen Custard



Old Courthouse

Black History Tour

This itinerary includes a guided private tour of the Griot Museum of Black History and a stop at the Old Courthouse, which was the setting for cases involving slavery, the fur trade and equal rights. A boxed lunch is included.

Construction Zone: Hard Hat Not Required

This itinerary includes a driving overview of Laclede's Landing, the Old Cathedral, the Old Courthouse, Busch Stadium and Citygarden, followed by an outdoor walking tour of the Gateway Arch grounds and a one-hour sightseeing cruise on the Mississippi River. A boxed lunch is included. ☁️

Shop 'Til You Drop at the Outlets

This itinerary starts with a driving overview of downtown St. Louis and includes time to shop at either of the two newest outlet malls in the area, St. Louis Premium Outlets or Taubman Prestige Outlets. A boxed lunch is included. ☁️

Get Your Kicks on Route 66

This itinerary includes admission to the Museum of Transportation and a docent-led tour of the Missouri History Museum's limited-time exhibit, "Route 66: Main Street Through St. Louis." A boxed lunch and a sweet treat from Ted Drewes (pending seasonal hours) are included. ☁️

Pre-convention Fam tours

Grapes, BBQ & All That Jazz

Experience award-winning tastes of Missouri before savoring history and culture on this cross-state adventure featuring charming small towns and bustling cities. Along the way you'll enjoy the rolling hills and German heritage of Hermann, well-known for its fabulous wineries and dining spots. Next up is Independence, the hometown of President Harry S. Truman and the site of the Truman Presidential Library and Museum. Cap the tour with a fascinating look at Kansas City, with stops spotlighting collections of the Arabia Steamboat Museum, the National WWI Museum and the American Jazz Museum.

Sips & Stars: All Roads Lead to Branson

Relive the heyday of the Mother Road when you travel Route 66 across Missouri. Classic neon signs, drive-ins and motor courts are highlights of this epic road trip through the Show-Me State. In Pulaski County, an area rich in outdoor fun and Route 66 history, you'll grab a bite to eat at one of the region's most popular restaurants. The adventure continues when you explore Branson, a city known for its high-energy live shows, amazing attractions and outdoor adventures.

Post-convention Fam tour

American Tapestry: Central Missouri Sampler

Prepare to be wowed by the architecture featured on this tour, which passes through the heart of Missouri as it winds its way to wine country. In Fulton, explore the National Winston Churchill Memorial, housed beneath the circa 1677 St. Mary the Virgin Aldermanbury Church, which was moved to Fulton from London in the 1960s. Then visit Missouri's Capitol, perched above the Missouri River and dominating the skyline of downtown

Jefferson City. A few blocks from the Capitol, you'll explore the grounds of the decommissioned 1836 Missouri State Penitentiary, which include the iconic A Hall, a housing unit built in 1868. An hour to the east, the Hermann Living History Farm depicts the lifestyle of German immigrants who settled the area in the 1830s, with the circa 1850 Greek-revival style Husman House among the highlights. A tour of the area's wineries is a delightful cap to this relaxing Fam.



National Winston Churchill Museum

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I Love the Nightlife

In addition to exploring this year's host city on the Sightseeing Tours, you will get to enjoy evening events at some of its top attractions. Food and fun will be on tap at four downtown spots during the following Travel Exchange socials:



Sunday: Icebreaker at City Museum

Sponsored by Explore St. Louis

This year's slate of evening events kicks off with the Icebreaker at St. Louis' iconic City Museum. You won't want to miss a Sunday night of fun at this unique attraction, which is more like a combination funhouse/playground than your typical museum. Housed in a former shoe factory, City Museum has 10 floors featuring circus acts, an aquarium, caves, a tree house, multi-floor slides, outdoor oddities and much more.

Monday: Opening Day Party at Ballpark Village

Sponsored by Ballpark Village

After a busy first day of appointments on Monday, you can cut loose at Ballpark Village. At the sports-themed complex, which is located adjacent to Busch Stadium, you can choose from several culinary options, music, dancing, riding the mechanical bull and watching the sporting event of your choice on one of the big-screen TVs. You also can visit the St. Louis Cardinals Hall of Fame and Museum and learn more about one of Major League Baseball's most storied franchises.

Wednesday: Tourism Rocks

Sponsored by Hard Rock Cafe International and Las Vegas CVA

During this annual delegate favorite, you can dance and party the night away at the Hard Rock Cafe St. Louis. The proceeds go to a great cause, as the event supports NTA's official philanthropic organization, Tourism Cares. Tour operators attend as guests of the sponsors, and DMOs and suppliers may purchase their tickets in advance for \$40 from NTA (email headquarters@NTAstaff.com) or if any remain on-site, for \$50 at the Tourism Cares booth on the Travel Exchange floor.

Thursday: Closing Night Party at Anheuser-Busch

Sponsored by Budweiser Brewery Experience

It's tough to imagine visiting St. Louis and not going to the world-famous Anheuser-Busch Brewery. Our Final Night event takes you to one of the nation's oldest breweries, where you can taste samples in The Biergarten, go on tours explaining the beer-brewing process and take pictures with one of the legendary Budweiser Clydesdales. Come raise a glass with your fellow Travel Exchange attendees to toast the end of a productive week!



ROBB COHEN PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO



GORDON RADFORD

TOP LEFT: MCELROY FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY



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Visit explorestlouis.com/groups.



One for the money, two for the show, three to get happy ...

There are a number of ways for you to be entertained, grab something to eat and do some informal networking each day at the convention center.

NYC Center Stage Luncheon

Monday, 12:15-1:45 p.m.

Sponsored by Broadway Inbound and NYC & Company

At this convention favorite, you will be treated to a meal followed by high-energy performances featuring actors, singers and dancers who appear on Broadway. The show will include songs from many top musicals currently delighting audiences on New York stages.

Government Relations Breakfast Bistro (by ticket only)

Wednesday, 8-9:10 a.m.

Sponsored by The Group Tour Company

Looking for a win-win-win to start your Wednesday? By attending the Government Relations Breakfast Bistro, you'll help raise money for NTA's Government Issues Fund (win), hear updates on legislative issues affecting the travel industry (win) and enjoy a hot breakfast (win). The gathering will also include headlining entertainment and the presentation of the James D. Santini Award. Tickets are \$50 and can be ordered by emailing headquarters@NTAstaff.com, or you can purchase them at NTA Registration during Travel Exchange.

Happy Hour

Wednesday, 5:30-6:15 p.m.

Sponsored by Aon Affinity and Hilmar Cheese Company Visitor Center

Wine and cheese are the featured items at this all-member gathering, which will take place on the show floor following Wednesday's business appointments. In addition to enjoying samples, you can don fedoras and fascinators, sure to enhance your already stylish attire. Following the festiveness, you can continue your culinary exploration during the evening's Dine-around event.

Additional meal functions

Monday, 8-9:30 a.m.

Opening ceremony and full breakfast (featuring keynote address by Chris Bashinelli)

Tuesday, 12:15-1:15 p.m.

Luncheon sponsored by The Soundtrack of America. Made in Tennessee.

Wednesday, 12:15-1:30 p.m.

Luncheon sponsored by Norwegian Cruise Line

Thursday, Noon-1:40 p.m.

Luncheon sponsored by Mexico Tourism Board



Lee Greenwood performed at the 2016 GR Breakfast Bistro



ROBB COHEN PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

Some Museums Make You Think— Ours Will Also Make You *Giggle!*



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the strong
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF PLAY

The 411 on your business appointments

The business appointments at Travel Exchange allow you to meet one-on-one with other members to do some information sharing and itinerary building. The Destination Pavilion meetings will take place Monday and Tuesday, and the Supplier Exchange appointments will be held Wednesday and Thursday.

Destination Pavilion

Tour operators and destination representatives come together for 10-minute meetings during the three Destination Pavilion appointment sessions. DMOs are seated and tour operators come to their booths, which are grouped into 10 geographic regions. *New this year: DMOs, you aren't restricted on the type or number of displays you can bring to decorate your booth, as long as the display fits inside an 8-foot by 8-foot space.*

Destination Pavilion appointment schedule

Session 1: Monday, 2–5 p.m.

Session 2: Tuesday, 8:15 a.m.–Noon

Session 3: Tuesday, 1:30–5:30 p.m.

Supplier Exchange

During the Supplier Exchange, tour operators will be seated for their seven-minute appointments with sellers. The Supplier Exchange will take place on Wednesday and Thursday, and scheduling depends on the member category of the tour suppliers (see box with category/day listings below).

Supplier Exchange appointment schedule

Session 1: Wednesday, 9:15 a.m.–Noon

Session 2: Wednesday, 1:50–5:30 p.m.

Session 3: Thursday, 8:15–11:45 a.m.

Session 4: Thursday, 1:45–5 p.m.

Tour Supplier appointment groupings

Suppliers who had appointments on Wednesday at Travel Exchange '16 will have them on Thursday in St. Louis, and vice versa. This change was made based on member feedback, and it doesn't impact the number of prescheduled appointments you'll receive.

Wednesday

Attractions

DMCs

Sightseeing
Companies

Tour Operators who
register as sellers

Motorcoaches

Airlines

Corporate Partners

Thursday

Hotels

Casinos

Passenger Vessels

Railroads

Restaurants

Multiple Services

Suppliers can schedule additional appointments through NTA's Direct Request system for either day, regardless of their membership category.



ROBB COHEN PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO



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2017 NTA Board of Directors election in progress

In case you don't vote in the 2017 NTA Board of Directors election before Travel Exchange—online balloting is open through Jan. 25—you can cast your ballot at the Annual Business Meeting and Talk Time in St. Louis. During that session, which will be held Monday at 9:45 a.m., each candidate will speak before the final voting takes place. To learn more about the candidates, go to NTAonline.com/2017-nta-board-directors-slate.

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THE SANTA FE OPERA

Paul Hapstead photo

Travel Exchange 101 sessions are must-attends for newcomers

One of the best primers you can get regarding the NTA convention is the popular Travel Exchange 101 seminar. The informative session, which is led by convention veterans Clayton Whitehead of Sports Leisure Vacations and Laura Elkin of Crescent Hotels & Resorts, will include tips to help you maximize your experience in your business appointments, during your free time and at social events. The seminar, which will be offered Sunday at 3:15 p.m. and Tuesday at 3:30 p.m., will be followed by a convention floor tour to help you get the lay of the land.





2016 Encuentro session

Hispanic Market is Focus of Wednesday Sessions

NTA continues to expand its reach in the Hispanic travel sector, which represents one of the fastest-growing demographics in the U.S. Whether you are already working this market or wanting to get started in it, make plans to attend the following two events on Wednesday at Travel Exchange:

Encuentro, 3:30–5 p.m.

*Sponsored by
Mexico Tourism Board*

This educational session will feature roundtable topics and discussions on key issues and opportunities specific to the Hispanic travel marketplace.

Fiesta, 5:15–6:30 p.m.

*Sponsored by
Norwegian Cruise Line*

You can enjoy some informal networking with other members involved in the market at the Fiesta reception.

Travel organizations interested or engaged in the Hispanic travel market, as well as travel professionals of Hispanic or Latino origin, are invited to attend these events. RSVPs are required and should be emailed to headquarters@ntastaff.com.

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Mexico Tourism Board
Thursday Luncheon
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SPEAKERS AND SEMINARS

Chris Bashinelli to speak at opening ceremony, lead breakout session

Chris “Bash” Bashinelli was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. After a decade-long acting career, including an appearance on the HBO series “The Sopranos,” Bash decided to use the media to bridge intercultural gaps. He now travels as host of the PBS series “Bridge the Gap,” showing what it’s like to walk in someone else’s shoes.

Bash has spoken around the world, from the United Nations General Assembly Hall to Fortune 500 companies to entrepreneur organizations in Saudi Arabia. He’s shared the stage with Stevie Wonder, Dr. Jane Goodall and former United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. Bash brings listeners on an inspirational journey, and he can equip you with the practical tools you need to grow your business, connect with others and contribute to humanity.

Here’s a look at his two Travel Exchange sessions:

Rules of the Stoop: the Three Simple Steps for Strengthening Relationships

[Keynote address at Monday’s opening ceremony and breakfast](#)

The stoop is a universal metaphor for building connections with people across intercultural, intergenerational and international boundaries. Bash’s childhood Brooklyn stoop was a set of stairs he shared with friends of 13 nationalities. Sometimes a stoop is a teashop in Saudi Arabia, a pile of rocks in Haiti, or the community workplace in a Minnesota accounting firm. In this flagship talk, Bash defines the practical steps by which you can create stoops both in your communities and in the workplace. Through thought-provoking exercises, audience participation and uplifting videos, you will be empowered to create more authentic relationships.

Ignore the Noise

[Meet and Greet with Chris Bashinelli](#)

Noise in the modern world is constant and distracts you from your goals and also from your internal decision maker—your heart. Before you can identify your unique talents and offer them to the world, you first must learn to ignore the noise. By putting down your smartphone and turning your attention inside, you will often gain insights into some of your most pressing challenges.

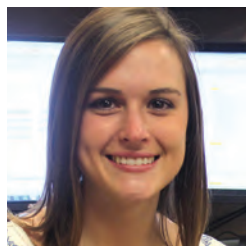
Chris Bashinelli



CC WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/MCHIEN623: bt/lyZglegCS



Andy



Anna



Ashley



Beth



Bob



Bond



Catherine



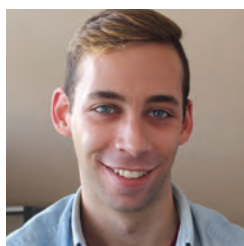
Dawn



Debbi



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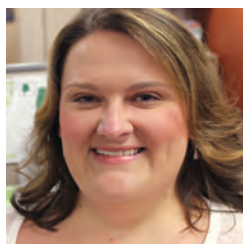
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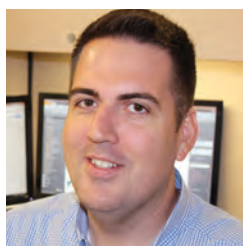
Morgan



Pam



Pat



Phillip



TJ



Todd

Your NTA staff wishes you a happy and prosperous new year.
 We're dedicated to our core values of **collaboration**, **professionalism** and **innovation** ...
 and we're not ruling out **having fun** either!



Featured seminars

Building Enduring Travel Industry Relationships

Thom Singer

In a social-media-crazed world, the quest for increased productivity pushes you to use digital and social media tools to interact with others. Thom will explore how you can maximize your online brand and reputation in a world where everyone is looking at their electronic gadgets instead of looking other people in their eyes. Join your fellow NTA members for an exciting presentation about how to build long-term networking relationships.

Improving the User Experience in Tourism

Stuart Levy

In the tourism field, user experience evaluations involve analyzing the variety of digital touch points between companies and customers before, during and after travel experiences. In this hands-on workshop, you will learn and apply methods to evaluate critical elements of the user experience. You'll gain insights that can be effectively applied in your business. Be sure to bring your laptop, tablet and/or smartphone.

Customer Service 411: Eight Killer Words

Nancy Friedman

Nancy Friedman, The Telephone Doctor, brings the eight killer words to life—words that distract, confuse, annoy and stop conversations. When that happens, it can be tough to get back on track. Some of your employees may be using them. And if they are, they could be killing the deal. You'll wish you had known about these words sooner—you'd have saved a lot of sales.

The Media Conundrum

Larry Mersereau

This session offers an updated look at where your can get the maximum return from your investment in marketing. Whether it's hours spent on social media and blogs, or dollars spent on traditional media, make sure you're getting the best possible results.

Bringing Your Authentic Self on Camera: Why YOU Are the Key to Your Video Marketing Strategy

Meaghan Corson

Understand the art of storytelling with video and how to use video to take your marketing to the next level. Learn the dos and don'ts of being on camera and how to form effective messaging that pulls clients to you. Hear the biggest mistakes new video users typically make and find out how you can jump ahead to pro status fast.

Using Technology for Marketing by Capturing Your Travelers' Stories

Sol Gilboa

Which technologies can help you gain more customers, retain your existing customers and simplify your job? There are creative new tools available that capture every aspect of group trips and compile them into lasting stories, long after your travelers return. What better promotes your tours than customers sharing their wonderful experiences? Join Gilboa as he shares how capturing travelers' stories can grow your business and save you time and money.



ROBB COHEN PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

Featured speakers

Stuart Levy

The George Washington University



Levy is an associate professor at The George Washington University, where he teaches hospitality management and marketing courses and has

led study-abroad experiences to China. Previously, Levy worked for tour operators, Globe Treks and Tauck. He received his bachelor's degree from the Cornell School of Hotel Administration, his MBA from Georgetown University and his Ph.D. from the University of Calgary.

Nancy Friedman

The Telephone Doctor



Friedman is president and founder of Telephone Doctor Customer Service Training. Telephone Doctor includes ServiceSkills.com, an online learning

platform offering over 100 online training modules on internal and external customer service, customer loyalty, communications, sales training, and management and leadership programs.

Thom Singer, CSP



Singer has more than 20 years of sales and marketing experience. He is an expert in branding, positioning and networking and has trained thousands

of professionals in the art of building contacts that lead to increased business. He is an author and entrepreneur who has written eight books and numerous articles for business and marketing publications.

Meaghan Corson

Flash22 Productions



Corson is a graduate from Emerson College in Boston and founder of Flash22 Productions. She brings out the best in people in front of the camera

for fantastic and genuine content. She brings years of video experience from producing scores of videos in broadcast news, marketing campaigns and corporate communications. She believes every company, product and person has a story, and she loves sharing stories through creative, engaging videos.

Larry Mersereau

PROMO Power



A professional speaker since 1993, Mersereau has addressed over 1,000 audiences across the western hemisphere, both in keynote/general session settings

and in breakouts, workshops and training programs. From corporate meetings to association conventions, he has worked with audiences in a broad range of industries, always with the same mission: to get business growing.



Looking ahead



BOB HOWENWISITSANTONIO.COM

This year marks Travel Exchange's return to fourth-quarter dates. Dec. 14–18, 2017, NTA will hold Travel Exchange in San Antonio, a city that's the heart and soul of Texas—with a dynamic blend of cultures: Native American, European, Western and Southern. NTA members who attend Travel Exchange in St. Louis can receive half-off registration fees for San Antonio until July 14.



CHARLESTON AREA CVB

In 2018, Contact, NTA's tour operator retreat, will be April 19–21 in Charleston, South Carolina. The coastal city is rich with historical attractions, fine restaurants and relaxed beaches. ☺

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Walking on thick ice: A number of hiking trails, such as the Trail of Blue Ice and the Byron Glacier Trail, provide spectacular views of Alaska's Portage Glacier. To learn more about what's new in Alaska, California, Nevada, Oregon and Washington, turn to page 56.

West U.S. **56**
Ireland and the United Kingdom **68**

West U.S.

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON



MARK DAMON/LAS VEGAS NEWS BUREAU

Smith Center for the Performing Arts

Viva Arts Vegas

Part of Las Vegas' star-power appeal comes from the seemingly endless parade of A-list musicians, performers and comedians that the city has been bringing to its stages over the past five decades. And while the city remains an entertainment mecca, it also is forging a reputation as a popular spot for the fine arts.

"Las Vegas has secured its place on the cultural map with offerings that include unique museums, world-class performance venues, large-scale art installations, high-energy festivals and outstanding exhibits," says John Meyer, sales executive for the Las Vegas CVA. "Visitors can immerse themselves in the cultural offerings that are unique to our city, which delivers a well-rounded dose of art and culture."

Opened in 2012, the Smith Center for the Performing Arts covers five acres in downtown Las Vegas' Symphony Park. The center is the permanent home of the Nevada Ballet Theatre and the Las Vegas Philharmonic, and it includes three theaters in two buildings, as well as a 17-story carillon tower with 47 bronze bells.

Visitors can see live theatrical, dance and music performances in 2,050-seat Reynolds Hall. The two other venues—the 258-seat Cabaret Jazz Theater and the 250-seat Troesh Studio Theater—offer flexible space for more intimate shows and rehearsals, and the Donald W. Reynolds Symphony Park's two-acre lawn is the site of outdoor concerts. Groups also can book guided tours of the Smith Center and take part in workshops with performers.

Another top cultural destination in downtown is the 18b Las Vegas Arts District. This area, which is home to a number of galleries and studios, antique stores, boutiques and restaurants, plays host to many special events. The First Friday Art Walk has become a must-do for visitors and residents alike, drawing up to 30,000 people each month.

Located between Bellagio and the Excalibur on the Strip, CityCenter Las Vegas also beckons culture lovers. As they walk between the property's high-rise mega-resorts, travelers can see art installations and sculptures that are part of the CityCenter Fine Art Collection.

To learn more, contact Meyer at jmeyer@lvcva.com or visit lasvegas.com.



Las Vegas Philharmonic

BRIAN JONES/LAS VEGAS NEWS BUREAU

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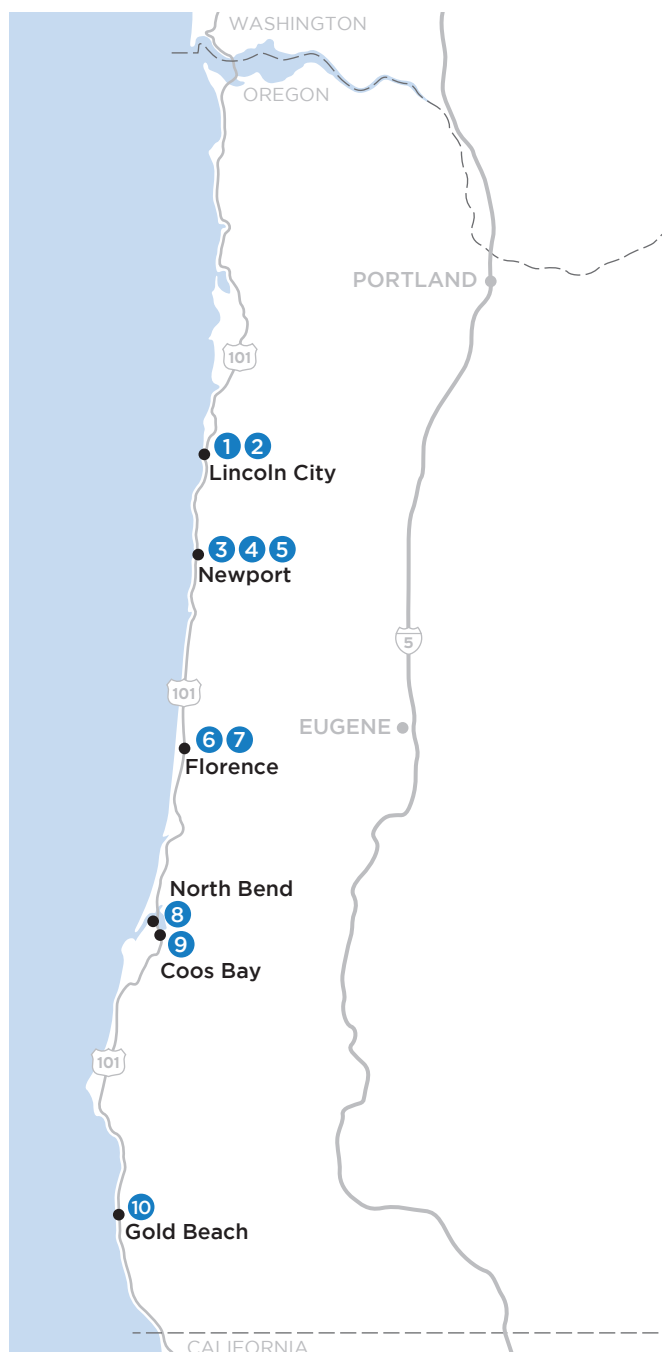


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All along the Oregon coast

Oregon boasts 363 miles of shoreline along the Pacific Ocean, from Fort Stevens State Park in the north to Crissey Field State Park just above the state's border with California. A journey down U.S. Highway 101 takes travelers past quaint coastal towns, historical lighthouses, national forests and recreational areas, rugged beaches and more.

In addition to the umbrella organization that promotes the entire coast, the Oregon Coast Visitor Association (visittheoregoncoast.com), NTA has 10 supplier and DMO members in the oceanside communities of Lincoln City, Newport, Florence, North Bend and Gold Beach. Here is a look at each of those 10 organizations.



1 Lincoln City VCB

Lincoln City | NTA contact: Sharon Wiest | oregoncoast.org

Lincoln City provides a number of unique experiences for groups visiting Oregon's central coast. Themed programs can include a glass-blowing session, a kite-making workshop, a gourmet cooking class featuring local products and photo walks through the forest.

2 Surftides of Lincoln City

Lincoln City | Camie Lupinacci | surftideslincolncity.com

Set on 10 acres in the heart of coastal Lincoln City, Surftides recently underwent a major renovation. In addition to enjoying the updated rooms, guests can have breakfast, lunch and dinner at MIST, which offers regional cuisine in an oceanfront setting.

3 Newport Chamber of Commerce

Newport | Lorna Davis | newportchamber.org

The city of nearly 10,000 is home to Oregon's largest fishing fleet, miles of sandy beaches, funky art galleries, eclectic restaurants and top attractions, including the Oregon Coast Aquarium and the Hatfield Marine Science Center.

4 Elizabeth Street Inn

Newport | Jennifer Morkert | elizabethstreetinn.com

The property is located high on a bluff overlooking the ocean and local beaches. Every guest room was updated as part of a 2016 renovation project, and each includes a gas fireplace, luxurious furnishings and a private balcony.

5 Marine Discovery Tours

Newport | Fran Mathews | marinediscovery.com

The company's signature sea life cruise showcases the beautiful Newport harbor area. During the two-hour naturalist-led excursions on the 65-foot *Discovery*, passengers may see seals, gray whales, bald eagles and shorebirds.

6 Three Rivers Casino Hotel

Florence | Jennifer Jones | threeriverscasino.com

Three Rivers is a 100-acre resort featuring 93 deluxe rooms, a massive gaming area, five restaurants and more. A number of specials are available for groups, including a red carpet arrival reception, free slot play coupons and other discounts.

7 Sea Lion Caves

Florence | Boomer Wright | sealioncaves.com

This cave is the height of a 12-story building and as long as a football field. Visitors can see thousands of Steller sea lions, which typically gather in the main cavern in the fall and winter and spend the spring and summer on rock ledges above the ocean.

8 The Mill Casino Hotel & RV Park

North Bend | Lucinda DiNovo | themillcasino.com

The Coquille Indian Tribe owns and manages this 202-room hotel on the picturesque Coos Bay waterfront. The property features more than 700 slots and table games, a dockside restaurant, meeting facilities and much more.

9 Coos Bay-North Bend VCB

Coos Bay | Katherine Hoppe | oregonsadventurecoast.com

The cities of Coos Bay, North Bend and Charleston are home to a range of adventurous activities. Travelers can take ATV tours over sand dunes, go kayaking along the coast and hike to a tide pool where sea lions congregate.

10 Visit Gold Beach, Oregon

Gold Beach | Jodi Fritts | goldbeach.org

Water plays an important role in the life of this southern Oregon town, which sits along the ocean and at the mouth of the Rogue River. Top activities include jet boat rides, salmon fishing tours, golf and hikes through coastal forests.

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INGRID BARRENTINE

Northwest Trek, worth the trek

Located roughly an hour south of Seattle and an hour west of Mount Rainier National Park, Northwest Trek Wildlife Park is a 725-acre attraction that showcases the area's animals and natural beauty. According to Group Sales Coordinator Joy Tevis, travelers are immersed in nature everywhere they go at Northwest Trek.

"Imagine riding through forests and meadows of unparalleled beauty, and viewing herds of American bison, Roosevelt elk, bighorn sheep, woodland caribou, deer and moose from the comfort of your seat aboard a tram," says Tevis. "Or walking along paved pathways to get up-close views of predators like bears, coyotes, wolves, foxes, bobcats and Canada lynx."

The tram tour is a naturalist-narrated, 50-minute ride that takes guests deep into the park's free-roaming area where many of the animals reside. "It's not unusual to have a bison right outside your window when a tram needs to stop briefly as the herd crosses the road or to look out and see a moose close enough to watch its steamy breath," she adds.

The park also has a number of nature trails that lead to large predator exhibits, wetland pools and other animal habitats. At the black bear area, visitors can see the creatures climbing trees, playing in the water and foraging. Playful river otters are the stars of the show at the wetland pools.

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Tevis says the aerial obstacle and zip-line courses at the park's Zip Wild adventure center provide a nice complement to the wildlife viewing options.

"Zip Wild, which opened in the summer of 2012, has become a favorite among our youth and school group visitors, because it not only provides physical fitness challenges but also confronts mental resilience and is great for team building," she says. "We've seen visitors of all ages—from 5 years old to nearly 90—climb, fly and soar on five different courses that range in skill level."

The popular Adventure Course includes six zip lines and many obstacles located 55 feet above ground in the canopy of Douglas Firs. Those aerial obstacles include a 30-foot climbing wall, a series of suspended bridges, a high-wire tightrope and more.

In addition to that course, which is recommend for youth 10 years and older, there are three others that are more suited for younger students: the Aerial Runway Course (8-plus years), the Discovery Course (8-plus years) and the Super Kid Course (5-plus years).

To learn more, contact Tevis at joy.tevis@nwtrek.org or go to nwtrek.org.



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(Jack) London calling in Oakland

During a trip to the San Francisco Bay area, travelers can enjoy a variety of experiences when they visit Oakland's diverse Jack London district.

"Jack London is an iconic neighborhood because of its prime waterfront location and historical tie to Oakland being a transportation hub in California," says Frances Wong, Visit Oakland's public relations and community relations manager. "Named after the famous American author, [the neighborhood] is a hot spot of restaurants, shops, and music and entertainment venues, which make it the perfect place to enjoy Oakland in a little amount of time."

One of the area's most popular attractions is the USS Potomac, which has a rich history that is shared on docent-led tours. The former naval ship was converted into Franklin Roosevelt's presidential yacht, and it is where he welcomed dignitaries such as Britain's Queen Elizabeth and King George IV. Groups also can charter the vessel for a private ride around the bay.

Wong recommends doing some sampling at the wineries that are part of the Oakland Urban Wine Trail. "Oakland is home to 10 tasting rooms, with most of them concentrated around walkable Jack London."

She says that 2017 will see the launch of the Oakland Ale Trail, also centered around the neighborhood. "Oakland is an emerging beer destination—growing almost daily—and is quickly attracting brewers and craft beer enthusiasts alike."

For more information, contact Kent Sundgren, sales coordinator for Visit Oakland, at kent@visitoakland.org or go to visitoakland.org.

USS Potomac



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Oakland Urban Wine Trail



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Making tracks in Alaska

Two NTA members provide railroad excursions that connect passengers with stunning Alaska landscapes or with their next itinerary experience.

White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad

Founded in 1898 as a freight and passenger service, White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad is now one of the top tourist excursions in Alaska. Along with taking in gorgeous scenery, passengers also gain insight into the history of southeast Alaska, where prospectors flocked during the Klondike Gold Rush.

"As you step aboard, you are transported to the early days of the railroad," says Jacqui Taylor-Rose, the railroad's manager of marketing and product development. "You will grow to appreciate what thousands of gold prospectors endured on their adventure to the untouched wilderness of the North."

An excursion to Lake Bennett takes groups to the new Bennett Station Interpretive Center, with historical information about the gold rush and the railroad. The day trip, which includes a boxed lunch, covers a lot of ground, Taylor-Rose says.

BRADLEY WITKE



"The 120-mile round-trip gives our day visitors the chance to get out of the hustle and bustle of Skagway and travel from Alaska to British Columbia and on to the Yukon Territory—all by rail."

The company's half- and full-day tours can complement other Alaska experiences. "Traveling by train pairs well with cruise itineraries and works for those traveling up and down the Klondike Highway Corridor," Taylor-Rose says.

For details, contact Taylor-Rose at jtaylor-rose@wpyr.com or visit wpyr.com.

Alaska Railroad

For more than 90 years, Alaska Railroad has connected travelers with the state's most popular destinations, including Anchorage, Seward and Denali National Park.

"We take a lot of pride in sharing this great land with our passengers," says Heather Dudick, sales executive. "Our trains tie together southcentral and interior Alaska, and we traverse some of the most beautiful landscapes in the world."

2017 marks the centennial of Denali National Park and Preserve, one of Alaska Railroad's most popular destinations. The Denali Star Train stops at the park twice daily in the summer. "Denali is a destination you'll want to include when planning your Alaska tours," Dudick says. "For the best availability, we recommend booking in the winter prior to summer travel."

Alaska Railroad offers onboard features such as glass-dome railcars and personal insights provided by Alaskan staff members. Dudick also points to the

GLENN ARONWITS



partnerships her company maintains.

"We work with lodging and tour partners all along the Railbelt, so that when our passengers arrive at their destination and step off the train, we're helping them experience the best of Alaska," she says, adding that she can connect groups with experiences ranging from a day-trip glacier cruise to a 10-day packaged tour.

To get more information contact Dudick at dudickh@akrr.com or visit alaskarailroad.com.

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NTA members shine in the Emerald City BY GABE WEBB

As I toured Seattle in mid-September, I realized this Emerald City is not unlike the Emerald City from “The Wizard of Oz.” There are gleaming, imaginative structures (the Space Needle and EMP Museum). People use unique modes of transportation (within an hour of my arrival, I dodged a man riding a unicycle on the sidewalk).

My first morning in the city, I met Lisa Schmidt, tourism development sales manager for the Space Needle & Chihuly Garden and Glass. Her attraction comprises an indoor exhibition dedicated to the work of glass artist Dale Chihuly, an outdoor garden replete with his pieces, and Seattle’s iconic observation tower.

Lisa walked me through the galleries, highlighting the techniques Chihuly and his assistants used to create the glass sculptures. Pieces range from beautiful, functional objects to pillars of cascading glass tubes. From November through April, visitors can see live glassblowing demonstrations in the garden at the Community Hot Shop, and the museum offers a variety of packages for tour groups.

“Our VIP Experience is an excellent option for groups of 10 or more people who are looking for an exclusive, unique Seattle experience,” says Schmidt. “This package enables groups to begin their private, hosted tour half an hour prior to

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the exhibition opening, and it includes a private photographer and a USB drive of images for the group to take home.” The experience also includes the museum shop’s Chihuly Catalog coffee table book.

After my tour of the exhibition and garden, I ascended the Space Needle. The views are exceptional, and the integration of digital technology into the attraction is fascinating.

“Guests can experience augmented reality, 3-D images and virtual reality as if they are flying on a seaplane or walking the halo at the top of the Needle,” says Schmidt.

After downloading the attraction’s mobile app, I was able to point my phone’s camera and see simulated views through portholes in the floor, or take a selfie with a tiny Space Needle.

Later in the week, I toured the city with Ride the Ducks of Seattle. I climbed aboard a World War II-era amphibious transport for a ride around Seattle, seeing the city’s landmarks and some of its quirkier nooks. Then, we splashed down into the water and enjoyed a beautiful panorama of the city’s houseboats, skyline and Gas Works Park. The tour has been voted Seattle’s best for eight consecutive years. From where I was sitting, I understood why.

“My absolute favorite moment is when we transition from being a streetside duck to a water-based duck,” says Tammy Guill, director of sales for Ride the Ducks of Seattle. “Especially that feeling of liftoff and watching the faces of folks who have never ridden with us before.”



RIDE THE DUCKS OF SEATTLE

“We offer [tour operators] a lot of value-added options,” says Guill. Her company has partnered with Ruth’s Chris Steak House, Buca di Beppo, Gordon Biersch and the Hard Rock Cafe to create combination packages, and it offers a staggered pricing structure for NTA tour operators. Ride the Ducks has also worked with tour operators to provide guide services to neighborhoods its tours do not normally reach.

“We pride ourselves on being an entertainment venue from the moment guests step on until they leave,” says Guill. During the ride, guides provide narration, crack jokes and turn the music up.

To learn more about the Space Needle & Chihuly Garden and Glass, contact Schmidt at lisaschm@spaceneedle.com. For more about Ride the Ducks of Seattle, contact Guill at tammy@ridetheducksofseattle.com.



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spaceneedle.com/groups

Chihuly Garden and Glass Group Sales
206.905.2186
groups@chihulygardenandglass.com
chihulygardenandglass.com/visit

Glacier exploration by foot, by boat and by train

One of the most accessible places in Alaska where travelers can go to see the state's abundant glaciers is the Portage-Whittier Valley. "The Portage area is such an amazing place," says Jara Haas, tourism sales manager for Visit Anchorage (anchorage.net). "It is a short ride from Anchorage but a world away from the everyday."

Portage Glacier



CC FLICKR/ANDREW LINDEN BT.M/2H75n04

Portage Lake's Begich Boggs Visitors Center is the starting point for exploration. From May to September, travelers can join a narrated boat tour that goes around the lake and stops at the area's crown jewel, Portage Glacier. Guided hikes and glacier walks also are available, with the Byron Glacier Trail leading walkers to the toe of its namesake glacier in less than a mile.

East of the lake is the city of Whittier, which sits at the mouth of the Prince William Sound. Two NTA suppliers, Major Marine Tours (majormarine.com) and Phillips Cruises & Tours (phillipscruises.com), provide half-day cruises that showcase tidewater glaciers and waterfalls, as well as seals, otters, seabirds and other wildlife.

For those who want to add a rail component to their tour, the Glacier Discovery Train is available through another long-time NTA member, Alaska Railroad (alaskarailroad.com). The company's 12-hour round-trip ride, which will run from May 27–Sept. 18, heads south from Anchorage through Girdwood, Portage, Whittier and the Spencer Glacier before reaching its turnaround point of Grandview.

"When people leave as the train pulls away from Spencer Glacier, you have a whole Alaska glacier to yourself for hiking, camping, kayaking, rafting, canoeing, or ice climbing, either on your own or with a guide," adds Haas.

A photograph of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) in shades of green and purple, dancing over a small wooden cabin with warm interior lights visible. The cabin is nestled among dark evergreen trees.

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A photograph of three Alaska Native dancers in traditional regalia, including red and black robes and headdresses, performing on a wooden stage.

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Who could sleep here?!

BY BOB ROUSE

On a family trip to San Francisco last July, we took the beautiful drive down the coast to Monterey. I had written before about NTA-member Monterey Bay Aquarium, and I wanted to experience it live and in person.

Let me just say, it's very live.

Monterey Bay, on California's central coast, is one of the richest marine regions on the planet. And the aquarium is right there where the sand meets the sea, housing nearly 200 exhibits and galleries devoted to the diverse habitats of the bay.


Visitors can discover the aquarium's lush kelp forest, charming sea otters, hypnotic jellies or its million-gallon indoor ocean—home to sea turtles, giant tunas, sharks and a shimmering school of sardines.

From one of the outdoor decks, I watched a staff member introduce a couple of kids to the underwater wonders of the tide pool through surface scuba diving.

The aquarium is an award-winning educational institution with engaging ways students can learn about marine wildlife and ocean conservation. Among the many programs offered are a behind-the-scenes tour and a group sleepover.

The sleepover—that's the one thing I don't get.

The aquarium is 300,000-plus square feet of pure fascination. How in the world can anyone close their eyes to that?

Maybe our friends at the aquarium can explain it. They can definitely fill you in on group programs. Email the travel trade sales team at touropsales@mbayaq.org. And get more info at montereybayaquarium.org. 





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Ireland and the United Kingdom

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

The inside scoop on Scotland's 'Outlander' sites

Scotland has seen a renewed interest in the legends of the Jacobites, thanks to the popularity of Diana Gabaldon's "Outlander" book series, which Starz and Sony turned into a TV show in 2014.

The main character, Clair Randall, is a World War II-era nurse who mysteriously gets swept back to the 18th century Scottish Highlands to the time of Bonnie Prince Charlie and the rise and fall of the Jacobites.

"Because the novel is so closely related to actual Scottish history, there are a lot of attractions and locations in Scotland that fans can tour," says VisitScotland's Maggie Anderson. "Places such as Doune Castle, Culross, Falkland Palace, Culloden Battlefield and the many standing stones have experienced a huge increase in visitors since the launch of the 'Outlander' TV series."

She said fans also can look forward to an upcoming exhibit at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, "Bonnie



Callanish Standing Stones

VISITSCOTLAND/KENNY LAM

Prince Charlie and the Jacobites," which will be on display from June 23 to Nov. 12.

Go to visitscotlandtraveltrade.com or email Anderson at maggie.anderson@visitscotland.com to learn more.

Irish I were in Ireland

Enchanted Ireland Tours and Discover Ireland Tours have many years of experience working with North American operators who bring groups to Ireland and the U.K. Here is a look at these two longtime NTA members:



Dublin's St. Patrick's Cathedral

STPATRICKSCATHEDRAL.IE

Enchanted Ireland Tours

Irish culture is on display during the company's programs, which cover a range of themes and often include visits to quaint towns and colorful villages, such as Dingle, Kinsale, Sneem and Durrus.

"Our most popular tours for first-time visitors to Ireland are those that combine some of the country's top attractions with some of lesser-known, but equally as beautiful, parts of Ireland," says owner Sean Fenton.

To learn more, contact Fenton at sean@enchantedireland.com or go to enchantedireland.com.

Discover Ireland Tours

In addition to its traditional sightseeing itineraries, Discover Ireland Tours is working on faith-based programs and pilgrimage tours leading up to Pope Francis' visit to Ireland in August 2018 for the World Meeting of Families.

"We are planning to add customized tours that include ancient religious sites—Clonmacnoise, Knock Shrine, Glendalough and St. Patrick's Cathedral—as well as our iconic landscapes and our rich history," says Eric O'Gorman, the company's director/tour organizer.

To learn more, contact O'Gorman at eric@discoverirelandtours.com or go to discoverirelandtours.com.

Explore Britain with Explore Britain Tours

It's an exciting time for the team at Explore Britain Tours, formerly Field Farm Tours Ltd. The six-year NTA member, which is based in Newark, England, recently adopted the new name to reflect the increasingly varied types of tours it offers.

"We have seen a growing demand for non-agricultural tours, and therefore Explore Britain Tours Ltd. was created to expand our identity," says Nichola Gray, tours coordinator. "We offer itineraries for many things clients are interested in exploring here in the U.K., such as castles, cathedrals, gardens, food and drink, literature, embroidery and even equestrian."

An example of a specialized tour the company is working on is an England-Scotland itinerary for a choir group from the United States. "We have set up concerts in quaint village churches and large cathedrals, and a joint concert in York Minster," says Gray. "One of the highlights is that the group will get to sing in a church that is part of one of The Royal Family's country estates—a truly unique opportunity!"

To learn more, reach out to Gray at info@explorebritaintours.co.uk or go to explorebritaintours.co.uk. ☎



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Courier's GUIDE TO NTA-MEMBER CASINOS & GAMING PROPERTIES

World-class gaming, luxury spa facilities and gourmet restaurants are just some of the things travelers can experience when they visit casino resorts across the United States. Many of these properties also have high-end shops, entertainment venues, conference centers and golf courses. Check with each of the member partners listed below about discounted group pricing and special programs available for tour operators.

Listings in this guide are based on an organization's membership category and preferences. The information was provided by the organization's contacts and was current as of Nov. 15, 2016. Please check NTAonline.com for updated information on member casinos and gaming properties.

The Desert Diamond Casino Hotel in Tucson, Arizona, offers a range of table games, slots, keno and bingo, along with fine dining at the Diamond Café and entertainment at the Monsoon Nightclub. ▶



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Wind Creek Hospitality Hotels & Casinos

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ARIZONA

Desert Diamond Casino Hotel

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dmarquez@ddcaz.com
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CALIFORNIA

Fantasy Springs Resort Casino

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The Hotel at Black Oak Casino Resort

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Ute Mountain Casino

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IDAHO

Coeur d'Alene Casino Resort

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cdacasino.com

ILLINOIS

Jumer's Casino & Hotel

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jumerscasinohotel.com

IOWA

Meskwaki Bingo Casino Hotel

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meskwaki.com

LOUISIANA

Cypress Bayou Casino Hotel

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cypressbayou.com

MICHIGAN

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+1.906.723.2121
kpasco@islandresortandcasino.com
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Kewadin Casino Hotel & Convention Center

Gloria Kemp
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Sault Sainte Marie, MI 49783-9467
+1.906.632.0530
gkemp@kewadin.com
kewadin.com

Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort

Melisa Brown
6800 E. Soaring Eagle Blvd.
Mount Pleasant, MI 48858-8432
+1.989.775.5498 (55498)
mbrown@sagchip.org
soaringeaglecasino.com

MINNESOTA

Treasure Island Resort & Casino

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+1.651.385.2716
carla.nygaard@ticasino.com
treasureislandcasino.com

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Beau Rivage by MGM Resorts International

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beaurivage.com

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino

Teresa Johnston
777 Beach Blvd.
Biloxi, MS 39530
+1.228.276.7316
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hardrockbiloxi.com

IP Casino Resort Spa

Leslie Barfield
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NEVADA

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Las Vegas, NV 89101-5606
+1.702.385.4011 (3070)
pdreyer@tlccasinos.com
fourqueens.com

Mesquite Gaming

Petra Jones
950 W. Mesquite Blvd.
Mesquite, NV 89027-5204
+1.702.346.6800 (6890)
pjones@mesquit gaming.com
mesquit gaming.com

Montbleu Resort Casino & Spa

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montbleuresort.com

Silver Legacy Resort Casino

Kimberley Thorndike
P.O. Box 3920
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kthorndike@silverlegacy.com
silverlegacyreno.com

South Point Hotel Casino & Spa Las Vegas

Maureen Robinson
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+1.702.797.8050
goldsmith@southpointcasino.com
southpointmeetings.com

Station Casinos

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Sales Department
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+1.702.367.2444
joni.peru@stationcasinos.com
stationcasinos.com

NEW JERSEY

Resorts Casino Hotel

Meg Lewis
1133 Boardwalk
Atlantic City, NJ 08401-7395
+1.609.340.7715
mlewis@resort sac.com
resort sac.com

Tropicana Casino and Resort

Wanda Sosa
Brighton & The Boardwalk
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wsosa@tropicana.net
tropicana.net

NEW MEXICO

Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort & Casino

Charles Meeks
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Mescalero, NM 88340-0269
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carla@foundryideas.com
innofthemountain gods.com

NEW YORK

Akwesasne Mohawk Casino

Michael Gleason
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Akwesasne, NY 13655
+1.518.358.2222 (1103)
mgleason@mohawkcasino.com
mohawkcasino.com

Saratoga Casino & Raceway

Colleen Carlson
324 Jefferson St.
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
+1.518.581.5750
ccarlson@saratogagaming.com
saratogacasino.com

Turning Stone Casino

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Tour & Travel Department
5218 Patrick Road
Verona, NY 13478
+1.315.361.7958
deirdre.mccarthy-polak@turningstone.com
turningstone.com

NORTH CAROLINA

Harrah's Cherokee Casino & Hotel

Matthew Pegg
777 Casino Drive
Cherokee, NC 28719-9761
+1.828.497.8229
mpegg@cherokee.harrah.com
harrahsherokee.com

OKLAHOMA

Downstream Casino Resort

Stephanie Simon
69300 Nee Road
Quapaw, OK 74363-2134
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ssimon@downstreamcasino.com
downstreamcasino.com

OREGON

The Mill Casino Hotel & RV Park

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+1.541.997.7529
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threeriverscasino.com

PENNSYLVANIA

Valley Forge Casino Resort

Megan Ansuini
1160 1st Ave.
King of Prussia, PA 19406-1355
+1.610.768.3214
megan.ansuini@vfcasino.com
vfcasino.com

SOUTH DAKOTA

Deadwood Gulch Gaming Resort

Michelle Patino
304 Cliff St.
Deadwood, SD 57732
+1.605.578.1294 (456)
outsidesales@deadwoodgulch.com
deadwoodgulchresort.com

WASHINGTON

Angel of the Winds Casino Hotel

Kristin Berry
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kberry@angelofthewinds.com
angelofthewinds.com

Emerald Queen Hotel & Casinos

Marty Youngren
5700 Pacific Highway East
Fife, WA 98424
+1.253.922.2000 (3428)
martin_youngren@emeraldqueen.com
emeraldqueen.com

Northern Quest Resort & Casino-Spokane

Tim Rhodes
100 N. Hayford Road
Airway Heights, WA 99001
+1.509.481.6165
trhodes@northernquest.com
northernquest.com

Silver Reef Hotel Casino Spa

Randi Axelsson
4876 Haxton Way
Ferndale, WA 98248-9130
+1.360.543.7142
bobbys@silverreefcasino.com
silverreefcasino.com

Tulalip Resort Casino/Quil Ceda Village

Donna Cappa
c/o Tulalip Resort, 10200 Quil Ceda Blvd.
Tulalip, WA 98271
+1.360.716.6600
donnac@tulalipresort.com
tulalipresort.com

COMMUNITY



Eight NTA tour operators discovered the beauty, culture and gastronomic delights of Arizona during a November product development trip. The story is on page 24; we've included a few more photographs here.

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Frankenmuth Chamber of Commerce and CVB

FRANKENMUTH, MICHIGAN

NTA contact: Lauren Masud Visuri,
sales manager

Office Phone: +1.989.652.4562

Website: frankenmuth.org

NTA member since: 1985

Talk about your background.

I have lived in Frankenmuth all of my life and have worked in customer relations for five years. I've been at the Frankenmuth CVB for almost a year, so the travel industry is newer to me, but I love it!

What are some of the things you enjoy most about your area of Michigan?

Frankenmuth is known as Michigan's Little Bavaria. There is nowhere else in Michigan, or the United States, that has the quaint village feel, history and traditions of old-world Franconia quite like Frankenmuth.

What are some of the must-do things in your area?

One is the famous chicken dinners served at the Bavarian Inn Restaurant and Zehnder's Restaurant right in the heart of downtown. Both restaurants offer meals served family-style, the way a traditional German dinner would have been eaten. Near downtown we also have Bronner's Christmas Wonderland, the world's largest Christmas store, which is a shopper's dream with over 50,000 gifts.

The Bavarian Belle Riverboat also makes the list of must-dos for first-timers in town and for tour operators. The *Belle* runs early May thru mid-October, and guests get a fabulous hour-long narrated tour of Frankenmuth aboard a 150-passenger authentic paddlewheeler.

My job is fun because ...

I get to help people plan a trip that involves my favorite places and things to do! I get to share what I love with people who have yet to experience it.



What musical act would you most like to take the stage and perform with?

I would have to go with Celine Dion. I am all about the costumes and theatrics!

For more information, contact Visuri at groupsales@frankenmuth.org.

Empire Hotel Group

NEW YORK CITY

NTA contact: Michael Link,
general manager, Belvedere Hotel

Office Phone: +1.212.245.7000, ext. 7134

Website: newyorkhotel.com

NTA member since: 1995

What properties are included in the Empire Hotel Group?

The Americana Hotel, Belnord Hotel, Belvedere Hotel, Carnegie Hotel (opened December 2016), Newton Hotel, Opera House Hotel, Pearl Hotel and the Travel Inn. I've been the general manager at the Belvedere Hotel for 12 years.

There are a lot of hotels in New York City. How do your properties stand out?

We offer a diverse collection of hotels located in vibrant neighborhoods near exciting attractions and destinations. Each Empire Hotel is distinct, offering a wide range of services in various styles

and price points that are certain to exceed expectations.

How did you get started in the hospitality industry?

I started working at a local Marriott hotel when I graduated from high school and was attracted to the industry by the constant interaction with guests and the goal of wowing them with exceptional service. My career began in banquets—setting up meetings and social functions—and I always enjoyed the satisfaction of contributing to a successful event and receiving positive feedback from guests.

What's your favorite time of year in the city?

Spring and fall are the most beautiful in the city and the most comfortable for getting out and exploring the uniqueness of each neighborhood.



Belvedere Hotel is close to Broadway. Do you have any performance experience?

The closest I've ever come to performing was in high school when I played trumpet in the orchestra, jazz and marching bands.

For more information, contact Link at michael.link@belvederehotelnyc.com.

Desert Belle Tour Boat

FOUNTAIN HILLS, ARIZONA

NTA contact: Kara Good,
director of sales and marketing

Office Phone: +1.480.984.2425

Website: desertbelle.com

NTA member since: 2013

Tell me a little about the your company's excursions.

The Desert Belle offers live narration cruises all year long, as well as live music cruises on the weekends featuring local artists. We also have many specialty cruises throughout the year such as beer and wine tastings, holiday cruises and extended canyon cruises.

What are some of the custom cruises you offer for groups?

The Desert Belle is very popular for private charters. We have groups come from all over for weddings, birthdays, holiday parties, corporate events and more.

How long have you been with the company, and how did you get to where you are today?

I have been with the Desert Belle for two and a half years now. I started working part-time as a crew member right after college. A year later, I took over as creative director handling all design work, the website and social media platforms. Then after two years I was offered the job as director of sales and marketing.

Is there anything new coming up that you'd like to share with NTA tour operators?

We were on track to have over 50,000 passengers cruise with us in the year of 2016. That is the most in Desert Belle history!

What destination is at the top of your personal travel list?

I have always wanted to travel to the Pingxi District in Taiwan for the Lantern Festival.



For more information, contact Good at info@desertbelle.com.

Geary County CVB

JUNCTION CITY, KANSAS

NTA contact: Connie Hall, director

Office Phone: +1.785.238.2885

Website: junctioncity.org

NTA member since: 2007

How long have you been in the travel industry?

I've spent 25 years in the industry and 25 years with the Geary County CVB.

What makes Geary County such a special place?

Geary County comprises the communities of Junction City, Fort Riley, Milford and Grandview Plaza. We are located in the heart of the Kansas Flint Hills, and Junction City has been rated by *Outdoor Life* magazine as one of the top 200 towns in America to live for anglers and hunters. We also are home to Milford Lake, the largest lake in the state of Kansas.

What are some of your top attractions for visiting groups?

Sites such as the U.S. Cavalry Museum, 1st Infantry Division Museum, Custer House, Buffalo Soldier Park and Geary County Historical Museum are just a few of the historical destinations we offer to visitors.

What is a hidden gem where you always take friends who are visiting from out of town?

The C.L. Hoover Opera House! We call it the "jewel of the prairie," and it has been a part of the Junction City community for over 134 years. It has lived through fire, was restored and reopened in 2008 going back to its performing arts roots.

What was your dream job growing up?

I wanted to be an artist.



If you could get up on stage and perform with any musician, who would it be?

Patsy Cline

For more information, contact Hall at chall@junctioncity.org.

Visit Clarksville
Frances Manzitto
+1.931.245.4345 | 800.530.2487
frances@visitclarksvilletn.com
visitclarksvilletn.com

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NEW MEMBERS

The following is a list of organizations that joined NTA recently. To access complete information on each of these new members, including a company description, log on to NTAonline.com and go to the member searches.

DMOs

The City of Morro Bay Tourism Office

Jennifer Little
Morro Bay, CA 93442 USA
morrobay.org

State of Texas Office of Tourism

Debra Bustos
Austin, TX 78711-2428 USA
traveltex.com

Visit Champaign County

Leah Longueville
Champaign, IL 61820 USA
visitchampaigncounty.org

TOUR OPERATORS

Safir Tours Pty Ltd.

Nayaz Noor
Fountain Gate, 3805 Australia
safirtours.com.au

Usino Quality Travel Planning LLC

Xingcan Li
New York, NY 11355 USA
usino.org

Via Mondo

Rosemary Mondo
Liverpool, NY 13088 USA
viamondo.net

TOUR SUPPLIERS

Argosy Cruises

Molly Schlobohm
Seattle, WA 98101-2937 USA
argosycruises.com

Cavallo Bus Lines Inc.

David Warren
Gillespie, IL 62033-1044 USA
cavallobus.com

Central Park Sightseeing

Hakan Ugduur
New York, NY 10019 USA
centralparksightseeing.com

Crowne Plaza Orlando Universal

Liz Favretto
Orlando, FL 32819-8950 USA
cporlando.com

Holiday Inn Resort Orlando Suites Waterpark

Christine Consunji
Orlando, FL 32821 USA

Newport Hotel Group

Al Gauthier
Middletown, RI 02842-5679 USA
newporthotelgroup.com

Surftides of Lincoln City

Camie Lupinacci
Lincoln City, OR 97367-4391 USA
surftideslincolncity.com

Ray Stevens CabaRay Showroom

Mike Hughes
Nashville, TN 37212 USA

Ripley's Believe It or Not! St. Augustine

Melisa Barnard
St. Augustine, FL 32084 USA
ripleys.com/staugustine

The Track Family Fun Parks & Branson Ferris Wheel

Julie Wilson
Branson, MO 65616 USA
bransontracks.com

Washington Jefferson Hotel

Greg Ludwiniak
New York, NY 10019 USA
wjhotel.com

The Watson Hotel

Mickey Hsiung
New York, NY 10019-3051 USA
hi57.com

ASSOCIATE

Lake Effect Associates

Lindsey Hughes
Traverse City, MI 49684 USA
lakeeffectassociates.com

NTA EVENTS

Save these dates in 2017 and beyond to connect with new partners and destinations.

For more information on these events, click the EVENTS tab on NTAonline.com.



St. Louis
Feb. 26–March 2,
2017



San Antonio
Dec. 14–18, 2017



Milwaukee
Nov. 4–8, 2018



CONTACT
Charleston, SC | April 19–21, 2018

Charleston, S.C.
April 19–21, 2018



CONTACT
Tucson, AZ • March 28–30, 2019

Tucson, Arizona
March 28–30, 2019



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CAPITOL HILL**

Washington, D.C.
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Elko Convention & Visitors Authority 62 exploreelko.com +1.775.738.4091	★ Maritime Museum of San Diego 54 sdmaritime.org +1.619.234.9153	Sioux Falls Convention & Visitors Bureau Inside Front Cover Gate visitsiouxfalls.com +1.605.275.6060
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Fairbanks, Alaska-Explore Fairbanks 66 explorefairbanks.com +1.907.457.3282 (3783)	Norwegian Cruise Line 17 ncl.com +1.215.513.1499	South Dakota Tourism 33-36 toursdakota.com +1.605.773.3301

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Delightfully disorienting

BY ANNA PLATTE-PANTAZAKOS

WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL growing up in the South, someone told me that if I dug a hole deep enough, I would eventually end up in China. Back then, China was as distant from the U.S. as any location I could imagine—a completely mysterious place that I would never see. Little did I know that as an adult, I would spend my days learning everything I could about the country that once seemed so far out of reach.

Making the commitment to seriously cultivate new business in the most populous country on the planet has been a winding road of precise cultural learning for Tanger Outlet Centers. Entering the Chinese market is delightfully disorienting, and it can understandably rattle even the most veteran business experts. (Trust me. I've seen things.)

Investigating a launch pad for entry into the market took time. Even when we settled on a business-to-business strategy, we tried many pathways before finding success. Despite a well-thought-out plan, we weren't initially meeting the returns we had set for this market.

We knew that we were leaving dollars on the table that could provide our partners with both an immediate ROI and an opportunity for some impressive single-transaction returns. We just needed to put fear aside and work hard to establish relationships that could span a lifetime.

Anna and Chris Babb size up a meal during an NTA trade mission to China in November.



CATHERINE PRATHER

As we do with any solid relationship, we started with a foundation of strong communication. In the beginning, my abilities to communicate in the Chinese marketplace were—to be charitable—rudimentary. I cribbed constantly from my NTA friends and colleagues, who were more than happy to tutor the new kid. Operators in the China Inbound Program were very warm and became eager, engaged thought partners. Kind guidance offered by NTA staff helped to make the runway to profitable programming shorter, and it connected supplier to buyer in a very personal way.

We are now more than four years into our implementation plans. Our multi-platform efforts, which have borne fruit every year, show potential for growth in volume sales for years to come.

Playing the long game in Chinese market development has always been our strategy. By positioning ourselves

as a learning organization and stretching the boundaries of our international outreach, we've extended beyond our comfort zone and achieved the win!

Making collaboration the top priority in product development placed us in a much more interesting position, one where we can innovate across channels in new and emerging markets that are critically important to our business. These innovations also helped to enrich strategy development—and grow share—in established markets.

There is no doubt China is a global power that will help shape the future. This means BIG business for North American companies that can successfully enter the market. In this interconnected global economy, bullish plays drive growth. Opportunities that were not easily afforded or executed in the past are now open platforms for new business. Imagine the possibilities for an even more diversified customer base—for businesses located well beyond the U.S. gateway cities.

I hope such possibilities inspire you to leave behind your preconceptions about the Chinese marketplace. The opportunities are at your fingertips. You just need to start digging. ☘

Anna Platte-Pantazakos, senior director of marketing and retailer relations for Tanger Outlet Centers, was part of an NTA trade mission to China in November. Her company has hosted three Fam tours for NTA operators.

Anna at Contact '16, where she connected with China inbound operators



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