

COURIER

DELIVERING BUSINESS ESSENTIALS TO NTA MEMBERS

FEBRUARY 2017



Courier's Distinguished Dozen

We announce the gold,
silver and bronze winners.

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Hanging out on board the
Norwegian Breakaway



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Drawn to the light: During First Friday art walks in Phoenix, local galleries and artists bring guests into exhibit spaces and take art out on the streets. To learn more about Phoenix attractions, turn to page 32.

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Courier's Distinguished Dozen

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PLANNING AHEAD

The 2017 editorial calendar can be found at NTAonline.com/advertising. Members are encouraged to submit tour product information or editorial queries to bob.rouse@ntastaff.com. For advertising information, please call +1.859.264.6559.

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

JUNE ISSUE

Destinations Deep South (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas); Mid-Atlantic U.S. (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania); Italy; Latin America

City Spotlight: Los Angeles

Special Coverage

North American National Parks
Guide: Receptive Services

Space Deadline April 7

Material Deadline April 17



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Courier aims to facilitate member-to-member partnering by spotlighting member product and destinations worldwide, to provide information on current industry trends and issues and to inform members about NTA initiatives, events and benefits.



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Bob Rouse

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I KNOW EVERYBODY CONSIDERS Valentine's Day to be the signature event in February, but for my money, give me Groundhog Day. The movie, that is. I'll tell you why.

I know everybody considers Valentine's Day to be the signature event in February, but for my money, give me Groundhog Day. The movie, that is. I'll tell you why.

Sorry to be repetitive; a little cinematic humor there. If you don't know the movie, "Groundhog Day" is a 1993 film about a weatherman who is inexplicably reliving a single day over and over in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, where he was sent to cover the groundhog and his shadow.

It's not that I'm enamored with repetition, although I have colleagues at NTA HQ who probably think I'm living that movie. I wear khakis and a button-down, like, every day. And I do happen to have apples and yogurt for lunch every, um, day.

But I'm not simply seeking carbon copies of life. I'm drawn to things that are familiar, pleasant and productive. (Those button-downs *really* work for me.)

And that brings me to Travel Exchange, NTA's signature event that this year, for the last time, is in February.

I love our convention. I have pictures from Travel Exchange on my wall. I take pride in the work I do for the association, I love interacting with you in person and, after six conventions, I'm starting to know my way around. For me, Travel Exchange is familiar, pleasant and productive.

When we're in St. Louis for TREX, we will recognize *Courier's* Distinguished Dozen winners during the Tuesday luncheon. But you don't have to wait until then to learn who won. We roll out the list of honorees starting on page 23. And on page 64, Mayflower Tours' John Stachnik shares his thoughts about the meaning of "distinguished." He should know.

This issue also focuses on the U.S. Atlantic Coast, page 38, and the city of Phoenix, page 32, with *Courier* writer Gabe Webb directing the spotlight. Look north of Phoenix to find the U.S. Great Frontier region, with coverage provided by Pat Henderson, starting on page 42. A little farther north is Western Canada, page 50, with five ideas for exploring five provinces.

I like Western Canada. The photo at the top of the page is me at the top of the world in Jasper National Park, where I toured in 2015 on a product development trip.

(You can't tell, but I was wearing a button-down. I did not have yogurt for lunch that day, though. But I do want to go back—over and over.)

I'll see you in St. Louis.

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On the cover:
A passenger aboard the Norwegian *Breakaway* enjoys the ropes course. Norwegian Cruise Line won gold in *Courier's* 2017 Distinguished Dozen.
Photo:
Norwegian Cruise Line





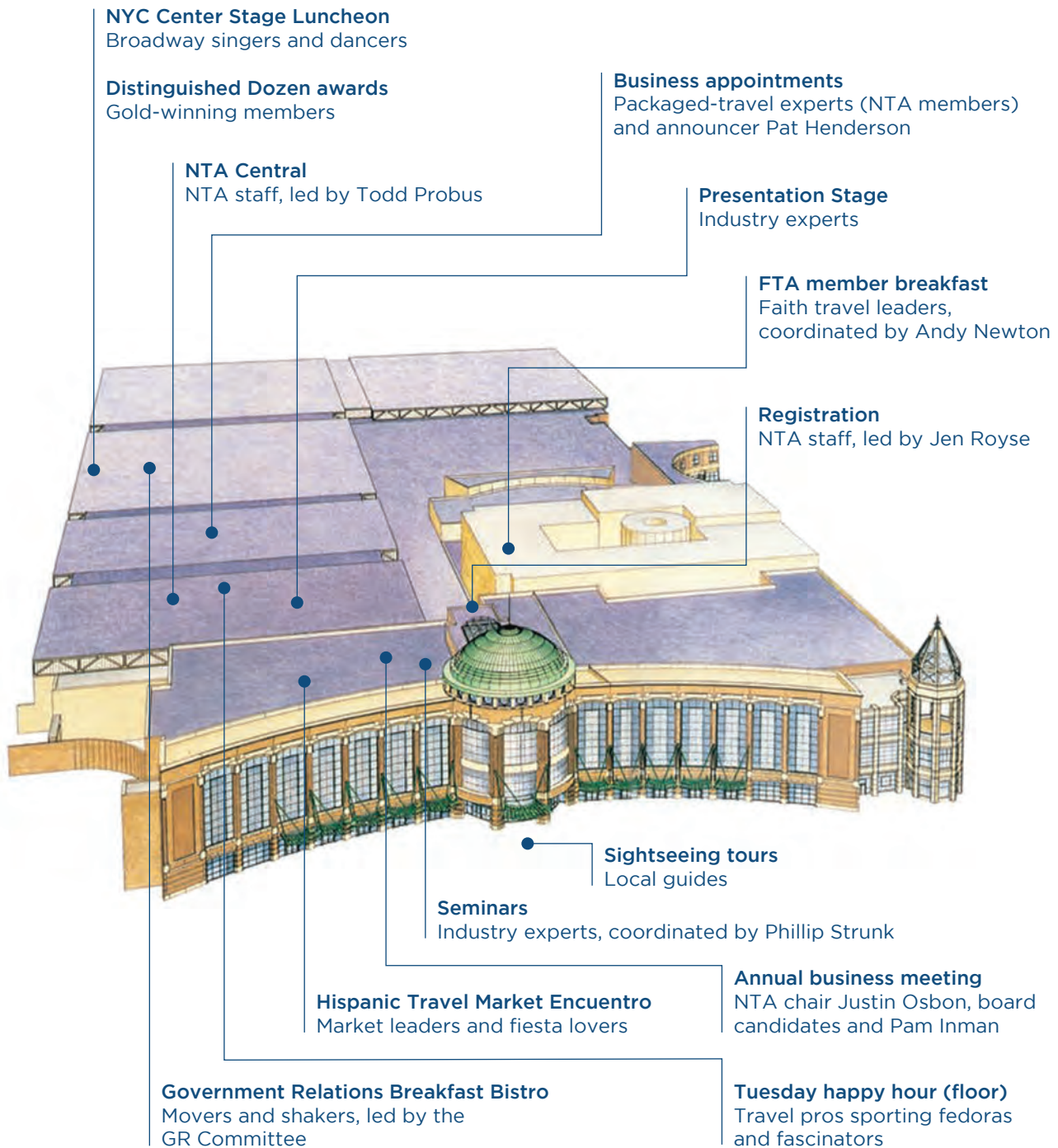
Visit explorestlouis.com/groups.



Feb. 26–March 2, 2017 | St. Louis

travel exchange

Delegates at Travel Exchange '17 will be able to hear voices of NTA leadership throughout America's Center in downtown St. Louis. Take a look at a few of the spots where you can engage with industry leaders.



For more information about Travel Exchange, including the schedule, business appointments and education sessions, visit NTAonline.com/convention.



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BUSINESS

InBrief

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

Let's keep a good thing going

NTA membership renewals due Feb. 28

Your 2016 NTA membership expires this month, so be sure to send in your dues renewal by Feb. 28 to keep your benefits in place and your organization in our member database.

Last year was full of memorable moments. From Travel Exchange in Atlanta, Contact in Québec City, the U.S.-China Tourism Year and the National Park Service Centennial to the launch of our new website, NTA and the industry accomplished a lot in 2016 thanks to your support and involvement.

Let's keep the momentum going in 2017. Simply return your invoice and payment to NTA Headquarters via:

- Online: apps.ntaonline.com/eweb/DynamicPage.aspx?webcode=renewal
- Mail: NTA, 101 Prosperous Place, Suite 350, Lexington, KY 40509 USA
- Email: headquarters@ntastaff.com
- Fax: +1.859.264.6570



Do you need another invoice or have questions on how to make the most of your membership? Feel free to contact NTA Member Solutions Manager Todd Probus at +1.859.264.6578 or todd.probus@ntastaff.com.

Together. We go further.



TREXpress: Your go-to source as you get ready for Travel Exchange

Need a few reminders as you make final preparations before you head to St. Louis for NTA's convention? In addition to referencing the January issue of *Courier*, which included a 32-page special section on Travel Exchange, you also can check out *TREXpress*, the monthly e-newsletter that features the latest updates about NTA's signature event.

Articles from the December and January newsletters have covered topics such as:

- One-on-one business meetings, including appointment scheduling tips
- Evening social events
- Featured educational seminars
- First-timer resources
- Sightseeing and pre- and post-event Fam tours
- Volunteer opportunities
- Lodging information

To access each edition of *TREXpress*, go to ntaonline.com/convention/trexpress.

Cast your vote for the NTA Board of Directors

In early December the association's Nominating Committee presented the slate of candidates for the 2017 NTA Board of Directors election. The online voting period opened shortly thereafter and has now concluded.

But if you haven't voted yet, there's still time. During the Annual Business Meeting and Talk Time at Travel Exchange, which will be held Monday, Feb. 27, at 9:45 a.m., each candidate will speak, and then members can cast their ballot.

To learn more about each of the nominees, go to ntaonline.com/2017-nta-board-directors-slate. ☎



All the cool kids are doing it!

Your 2016 dues expire Feb. 28.

Keep your place in the NTA Online Member Search—used 8,000 times monthly—and the 2017 NTA Membership Directory by renewing your dues today.

"We have many reasons for belonging to NTA but two stand out—the credibility it gives us as an entrenched member of our industry and the ability to network across a broad spectrum of industry partners."

—John Stachnik, CTP, Mayflower Tours, NTA member since 1979



Need another invoice? Have questions on how to make the most of your membership? NTA's Todd Probus can help. Reach Todd at +1.859.264.6578 or todd.probus@ntastaff.com.



RELATING TO GOVERNMENT

INSIGHTS ON U.S. LEGISLATIVE ISSUES AND INDUSTRY TOPICS



New funding for U.S. national parks

Passed with bipartisan support, the National Park Service Centennial Act addresses infrastructure needs.

MORE THAN 140 YEARS AGO, the U.S. Congress enacted legislation that established Yellowstone National Park as the country's first national park. The legislation determined that the area between Montana and Wyoming be known as "a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people" and placed it under exclusive control of the Secretary of the Interior.

The founding of the first national park began a nationwide movement, and similar areas around the country became preserved land. Today the United States possesses more than 400 national parks and employs some 20,000 people to care for and maintain these popular areas.

On Dec. 16, 2016, President Barack Obama signed into law P.L. 114-289, the National Park Service Centennial Act. The bill was first introduced in

March by Rep. Rob Bishop, R-Utah, who chairs the House Committee on Natural Resources, and in December it passed both the House and the Senate with bipartisan support.

The Centennial Act provides new funding and management authority to the National Park Service as the agency comes out of a momentous year in which it celebrated its 100th anniversary. Furthermore, the Centennial Act addresses some of the \$12 billion needed for repairs to park infrastructure, such as unmaintained trails and deteriorating buildings.

The road to the bill's passage was long, but the Centennial Act made it over the finish line just as Congress was preparing to leave for the year.

Rep. Bishop was extremely influential in its movement. "We need creative solutions to improve the management

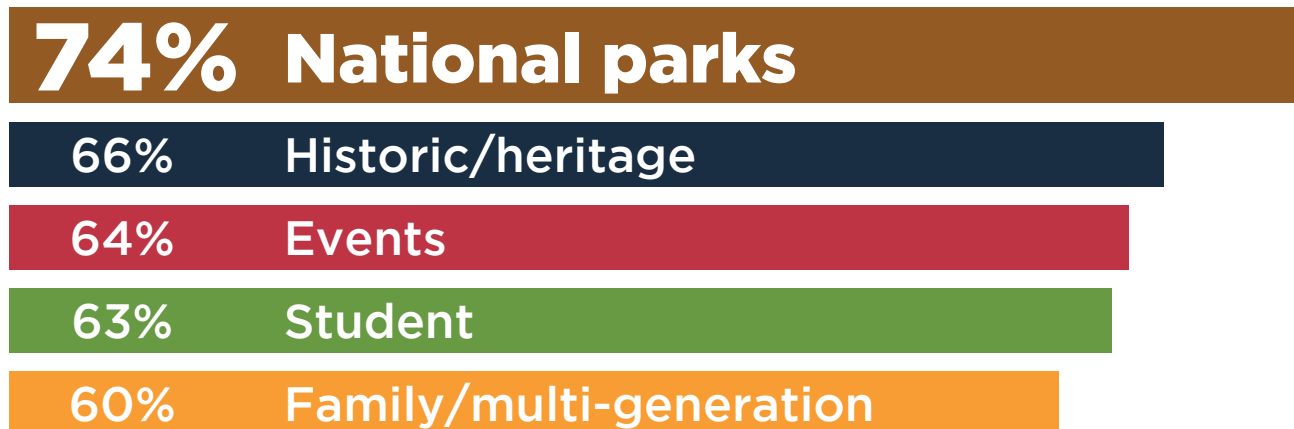
of the National Park System and to guarantee the centennial is a success for all Americans," he stated during the bill's markup. "This legislation puts forward creative mechanisms to achieve these goals by expanding philanthropic opportunities to our parks across the country."

Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, worked to push the bill through the Senate. He said, "This new law will help ... maintain these sites and preserve the cultural heritage of our great country for future generations."

Passage of the bill also relied on the support of Energy Committee Chair Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, and Ranking Member Maria Cantwell, D-Wash. "It is our congressional responsibility to provide the park service with adequate resources to best take care of the parks that are enjoyed by the millions of

Top NTA markets

National parks are the tour products/markets most commonly packaged by member companies. Here are the top five, ranked by percentage of member companies that offer them.



Source: 2016 NTA tour operator profile

Americans who visit each year," Sen. Cantwell said.

Both chambers have made an immense impact by supporting the parks, and members look to carry the momentum forward as improvements in the parks progress.

The National Tour Association was tremendously involved in the process of enacting the Centennial Act as an actively engaged member of the National Parks Second Century Action Coalition. The organization is dedicated to promoting the protection, restoration and operation of the national park system to benefit the well-being of current and future generations of citizens and visitors. Overall, the coalition acts to help the NPS foster visitor engagement, involve youth, promote tourism and preserve the nation's cultural heritage.

Last year, the NPS centennial celebration brought a lot of attention—and visitors—to the parks. And the passage of the act helps start off 2017 with a forward-looking approach to restore and renew America's treasures for the next 100 years.

The parks' transportation systems, which include roads, bridges, tunnels and ferries, have been in a state of steady decline over the past several decades due to chronic underfunding. The current backlog of park transportation projects totals more than \$6 billion. The recent passage of another bill—Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act—provides a necessary funding increase for park roads, but many more needs remain. NTA is poised to work with members of Congress to promote these types of investments in the upcoming infrastructure package.

The Centennial Act is a positive step forward for the United States, but it's just the start. NTA leaders and members remain eager to improve the parks, just as the national parks have helped improve the lives of the American people. Continuing to push for major initiatives and national park resources will remain a high priority for NTA this year as the 115th Congress kicks off. 📍

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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Business Visa Center serves international visitors and U.S. hosts

BY GABRIEL C. GARCIA AND
JAMES J. McMILLIAN,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

HAVE YOU EVER been part of a planning team for a trade show or conference that had a large number of international delegates who needed a visa to attend the event? Or have you ever heard from key participants that they were having issues obtaining a visa to attend your conference or trade show? If so, you'll be glad to know there is an office within the U.S. Department of State that can assist you.

The Business Visa Center, established in 2005 and based in Washington, D.C., strives for an efficient and straightforward visa process and provides information on U.S.-inbound business travel to people at domestic businesses and their partners and customers around the world.

Business visas

A business visa, classified as B-1, is appropriate for people making short visits to the U.S. to consult with business associates; attend a scientific, educational, professional or business convention or conference; settle an estate; negotiate a contract; or participate in short-term training, among other activities.

In fiscal year 2015 the Department of State issued nearly 10.9 million nonimmigrant visas for foreign visitors to the U.S. Business visas, alone or in combination with other types of travel, constituted 78 percent of those issuances.

BVC seeks the broadest possible business audience, and its outreach includes in-person speaking engagements by the

BVC staff, along with maintaining mass media channels such as travel.state.gov, U.S. embassy and consulate websites, social media outreach and an FAQ page that is regularly updated.

Visa guidance

Every day, BVC responds to dozens of inquiries on how, where and when to apply for a visa; who to contact for case updates; how to assist with delays or meet urgent travel schedules; and questions about U.S. immigration law and visa policy.

The BVC staff recognizes that first-time visa applicants and their U.S. hosts need guidance through visa process steps, which are essential to completing legitimate U.S. travel plans. The center also stands ready to offer business-travel guidance to nationals of Visa Waiver Program countries, who typically are not required to pursue the visa process.

BVC also informs U.S. embassies and consulates of public and private sector summits, conferences, conventions, trade shows, award ceremonies and athletic competitions taking place in the U.S. These events might draw mass media coverage, high-level U.S. government interest and thousands of attendees, or they might be highly specialized, appealing to carefully targeted participants.

BVC prioritizes the events based on the visa demand they generate and the benefits they provide for our national interests, the U.S. economy and the

U.S. nonimmigrant visas issued in 2015

10,891,745	Total nonimmigrant visas issued*
8,510,491	B-1 and B-2: business and pleasure**
644,233	F-1: student
332,540	J-1: exchange visitor
172,748	H-1B: temporary worker of distinguished merit and ability
30,947	K-1: fiancé(e) of U.S. citizen
24,262	P-1: internationally recognized athlete or entertainer
10,909	A-1: ambassador, consul and immediate family

*There are 83 classifications. Top three are listed, along with four additional noteworthy classifications.

**Includes five types of B-1 and B-2 combinations

Source: U.S. Department of State

American people. In 2016 alone, BVC facilitated 32 events that brought approximately 80,000 foreign visitors to the United States.

Top priority: border security

While facilitating legitimate travel is an important aspect of the BVC's work, border security is the State Department's highest visa policy priority. BVC is not a shortcut in the visa process; rather, it is an information portal for U.S.-based businesses and organizations.

Under U.S. immigration law, visa applicants must meet all requirements for the B-1 visa, and they must bring supporting documentation to their interview at the U.S. embassy or consulate. Only consular staff at U.S. embassies and consulates abroad may evaluate a visa application and conduct a visa interview.

BVC does not guarantee the issuance of a visa, overturn visa adjudications or advise on visa classifications, but the staff can do the following:

- Guide U.S. organizations through procedures or requirements that are specific to an embassy or consulate.
- Direct U.S. organizations to embassy/consulate-specific visa application procedures and clarify information about the visa application process.
- Familiarize U.S. organizations with criteria for expedited interview appointments and facilitate cases involving significant U.S. government interest.
- Support U.S. conference and sports organizers by posting events expected to draw a large number of foreign visitors on the Visa Office intranet.
- Provide indirect support to embassy/consulate staff by answering inquiries from U.S. organizations and their international partners related to travel with the B-1 visa.
- Conduct ongoing public outreach on the business visa process.

BVC contact information

While BVC serves U.S.-based organizations from its Washington, D.C., headquarters, the BVC staff can provide contact information for U.S. embassies and consulates worldwide. The BVC staff also can provide contact information for the National Visa Center for visa-related questions involving non-business U.S. travel.

Now in its 12th year, BVC is committed to serving the international travel interests of U.S. businesses who seek stronger links around the world. For inquiries, please contact BVC by email at businessvisa@state.gov or by phone at +1.202.485.7675. Further information can be obtained at the website: bit.ly/2ijWApH.

Gabriel C. Garcia and James J. McMillian are with the Office of Field Operations in the Business Visa Center, part of the Bureau of Consular Affairs in the U.S. Department of State.



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Kyle Anderson

Home state: Ohio

College: University of Kentucky

Career aspiration:

"My goal is to be an executive for a major cruise line."



Emily Ayscue

Georgia

University of Georgia

Career aspiration:

"I hope to become a professor focusing on co-developed community research efforts and engaging students within

the tourism industry through experiential learning opportunities."



Jordan Bacon

Alabama

University of Alabama

Career aspiration:

"I hope to one day be either an event planner for a non-profit organization or a wedding planner."



Julia Blackham

Utah

Brigham Young University

Career aspiration:

"My goal is to open a small tourism business in England."



E'Lisha Fogle

South Carolina

Clemson University

Career aspiration:

"I intend to remain in the academy as an educator, while motivating students—as well as guests—to be responsible

tourists in every capacity."



Breanna Hendrickson

Washington

Washington State University

Career aspiration:

"My goal is to work with Princess Cruises in Seattle."



Chadley Hollas

Texas

Texas A&M University

Career aspiration:

"I hope to encourage the holistic design and considerate development of touristic products and experiences."



Laura Anne Hunt

Minnesota

University of North Texas

Career aspiration:

"My goal is to have a tourism-based educational center that demonstrates how people can be more conscious and

sustainability-minded travelers without compromising their comfort or considerably altering their current practices."

THE 16 TOURISM CARES STUDENTS who journey to St. Louis will learn about the industry from the inside out. Recipients of awards from the Bruce Beckham Scholarship Fund/NTA Mentoring Program, the students will participate in educational sessions and networking events, plus they'll be paired with mentors and shadow them during business appointments. We'll give you a head start on getting to know the students by providing each one's name, home state, college and goals.



Samantha Lee

Massachusetts
Johnson & Wales University

Career aspiration:

"I look forward to establishing a career in the travel industry and making lifelong connections."



Brooke Sanders

Texas
Tarrant County College

Career aspiration:

"I intend to be a conference coordinator. Studying hotel and restaurant administration was the best decision I could have made."



Gabrielle Morford

Florida
University of Central Florida

Career aspiration:

"I see myself managing a resort and dealing with staff management in the hospitality industry."



Hannah Starner

Pennsylvania
University of Central Florida

Career aspiration:

"My career goals include making an impact in the industry that I have a passion for."



Eric Paul Noonan

Nevada
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Career aspiration:

"I plan to become an educator in the hospitality field at an institution of higher education."



Sarah Weber

Georgia
University of Georgia

Career aspiration:

"I hope to become a guide for an international volunteer organization so I can help developing countries in need."



Madalyn Pearson

Washington
Washington State University

Career aspiration:

"I plan to become a hotel/resort manager, working around the world."



Rachel Wilson

Texas
University of North Texas

Career aspiration:

"My hope is to continue growing my company and working in the tourism industry in Latin America, whether it's as a tour guide, coordinator or academic researcher."

For more information about the Tourism Cares scholarship programs, visit tourismcares.org/academic-scholarships. 📍

There's nothing like being there

THE NTA CALENDAR IS HIGHLIGHTED with two conventions in 2017, as Travel Exchange returns to fourth-quarter dates after we're in St. Louis Feb. 26–March 2. There's still time to join your association partners in the Gateway to the West, and if you come to St. Louis and sign up for Travel Exchange in San Antonio by July 14, you'll save 50 percent on your registration fees for the Dec. 14–18 show.

Another big event is Destination Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., March 28–29. NTA partners with the U.S. Travel Association and Destination Marketing Association International for a legislative day on Capitol Hill to educate policymakers about the power of travel as an economic driver.

Visit NTAonline.com for more details and to register for these upcoming events.



EXPLORE ST. LOUIS



RISDON PHOTOGRAPHY



CC FLICKR/PETER LINEHAN: bit.ly/2JAguzK

Travel Exchange Feb. 26–March 2

Renee Eichelberger, CTP
Director, leisure travel sales
Explore St. Louis



"I can't wait to welcome my NTA family to St. Louis, the city that I love and care so much about. St. Louis has experienced a trans-

formation the past couple of years with new attractions, restaurants and entertainment options for all types of visitors. So even if you visited St. Louis just two years ago, we have a whole new destination just waiting to be discovered."

Destination Capitol Hill March 28–29

Paul Nakamoto
Executive vice president
Gray Line of San Francisco



"I have participated in NTA's fly-in event, and when I need something, I know who to call—and they know who I am. When our company was

about to launch Gray Line Monterey, I had trouble getting a loading zone on Cannery Row, so I reached out to Rep. Sam Farr, who met our company president and me for breakfast. Guess what? I have my loading zone. That would never have happened if I didn't participate in NTA's advocacy event."

Travel Exchange Dec. 14–18

Casandra Matej
Executive director
Visit San Antonio



"We look forward to hosting you in San Antonio for NTA's second Travel Exchange of 2017. Our city always has been a motorcoach-

group-friendly destination, and our commitment to hosting NTA for your spotlight event exemplifies that support. You'll arrive at a remarkable time of year, as San Antonio during the holidays is a truly wonderful place to be. It's a special time, and having you here will make it even more so."



Leadbetter to keynote GR Breakfast Bistro



Donald Leadbetter

Donald Leadbetter, the newly appointed tourism program manager for the U.S. National Park Service, will give the keynote address at the Government Relations Breakfast Bistro, Wednesday, March 1, at Travel Exchange '17 in St. Louis. Leadbetter collaborates with the tourism sector to facilitate, manage and promote sustainable tourism to national parks.

In addition to hearing what's on tap at the parks, you'll learn more about NTA's 2017 legislative priorities. The breakfast also includes the presentation of the James D. Santini Award to Tom "Bulldog" Jaffa, CTP, of Seattle-based Jaffa Travel & Receptive Services.

Your \$50 ticket goes to support NTA's Government Issues Fund. Purchase tickets by emailing NTA Headquarters at headquarters@ntastaff.com.

Marketing the Gateway City

BY BOB ROUSE

At the end of February, NTA members from North America and 30 countries overseas will meet in St. Louis for Travel Exchange. We talked with Kitty Ratcliffe, president of Explore St. Louis, to learn more about the business—and pleasure—of marketing the Gateway City. Ratcliffe also speaks to the many changes the city has seen in recent years.

The last time NTA held its convention in St. Louis was in November 1980, which, by coincidence, was the year the association held two conventions as it switched from first-quarter to fourth-quarter dates.

You're hosting Travel Exchange and hundreds of tour operators later this month. How do you plan to show off your city?

Ratcliffe: First, let me just say how honored and excited we are to host NTA's 2017 Travel Exchange. We've been members of NTA since 1977, and throughout that time we've developed some great relationships with partners from across the industry. I can tell you that our entire St. Louis hospitality community is looking forward to opening its doors to all our NTA friends.

We've partnered with Destination St. Louis LLC and many of our local partners to create a series of eight distinctive St. Louis tours for attendees to choose from, and NTA members will learn about our region and all it offers to visitors and residents alike. These sightseeing tours will touch on everything from baseball and the blues to Forest Park and the exclusive arts district, Grand Center.

Why is the group travel market important to your organization?



Kitty Ratcliffe,
president of Explore St. Louis



Renee
Eichelberger (r)

Ratcliffe: In St. Louis, we welcome more than 25 million visitors on an annual basis. They come here for conventions, meetings, business and, of course, leisure travel. The group travel market is an essential piece of our leisure travel business, and we are so fortunate to have a great team led by Renee Eichelberger (pictured above, right). Renee is a tireless advocate for St. Louis and a wonderful ambassador for us with the group travel industry. We have always been—and always will be—committed to the group travel market.

What role does Explore St. Louis take in establishing the city's unique identity?

Ratcliffe: We promote the region's \$5.38 billion a year travel and tourism industry through our extensive marketing campaigns that work to reach regional and national audiences, including diverse multicultural campaigns that are inclusive and welcoming to all visitors.

If you haven't been to St. Louis recently, you'll be amazed at all the momentum pulsing throughout our region. With new construction projects underway downtown, including the landmark \$380 million CityArchRiver project that is reinventing the grounds surrounding our iconic Gateway Arch, we are confident that NTA's attendees will be impressed by what they see happening to transform our historical city.

What are key changes you're seeing in tourism and traveler behavior—and how are you addressing them?

Ratcliffe: There are always changes and challenges facing our industry. Two that come to mind that impact the group travel market are the fluctuating U.S.



Ballpark Village and Busch Stadium

EXPLORE ST. LOUIS

exchange rates and the ever-tightening booking needs of group travel planners.

In St. Louis we are blessed to have a large number of free and affordable attractions, such as the Saint Louis Zoo, the Saint Louis Science Center, the Missouri History Museum, the Anheuser-Busch brewery tour and many more. In fact, St. Louis's number of free attractions is second to only Washington, D.C. This means increased value for visitors and group traveler planners who are looking for ways to navigate around constantly changing exchange rates.

**We have always been—
and always will be—
committed to the group
travel market.**

—Kitty Ratcliffe

Finally, we continue to see that group-tour booking windows are getting shorter and more compact. Our team has worked hard to help group planners

by ensuring that the dedicated group tour section of our website is robust with information they need to create itineraries that meet any and all timelines. We also focus on utilizing the latest technologies to better communicate and improve our responsiveness to customer needs, questions and inquiries.

Travel Exchange will be held in St. Louis Feb. 26–March 2. For more information about the convention, visit NTAonline.com/convention. To learn more about the host city, visit explorestlouis.com.



Forest Park

MCELROY FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY

Discover Dayton's German, Irish and Greek heritage

Several times a year, Ohioans celebrate their rich ethnic culture with weekend-long events in the city of Dayton. Festival-goers can experience the city's ties to Germany, Ireland and Greece at the following annual celebrations:

Dayton Celtic Festival (July 28-30) When travelers can't kiss the Blarney Stone or stand in awe of Edinburgh Castle, gathering at the Dayton Celtic Festival to celebrate local Celtic history is the next best thing. The festival offers the Parade of Kilts, music, beverage tastings, a 5K run/walk, a Sunday Mass, and souvenirs imported directly from Ireland and Great Britain.

Dayton Liederkrantz-Turner Germanfest Picnic (Aug. 11-13) The picnic offers lots of live music and food, but it wouldn't be authentically German without beer. There'll be a huge selection of German draft and bottled brews and German-style craft beers from Ohio breweries. Visitors can purchase lederhosen, research their genealogy and win a trip for two to Germany plus \$1,000 in spending money.

Dayton Greek Festival (Sept. 8-10) Tours of the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, music, cooking demonstrations and dance performances are on the schedule for the 58th edition of this annual festival, and visitors can learn about the original Greek families in Dayton.

Oktoberfest (late September) Dayton's rich German heritage is the focus of this festival, which raises money for the Dayton Art Institute. Event-goers can enjoy live music on two stages, drink international wines and beers, and browse arts and crafts.

For more information, call the Dayton CVB at **+1.937.226.8211** or visit **daytoncvb.com**. —K.F.



DAYTONCELTICFESTIVAL.COM

Dayton Celtic Festival

A Shenandoah showdown

Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historic Park, located in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, contains the site of a decisive Civil War battle that took place Oct. 19, 1864. During a visit to the Cedar Creek Battlefield, groups can learn more about the key victory for the Union Army and see sites pertaining to that era of the city of Middletown's history.

Ranger-led programs, which cover a wide range of topics, are available throughout the year. The interactive 30-minute Cedar Creek and Belle Grove in a Box session, held at the main visitor center, covers the history and settlement of the Shenandoah Valley along with the impact of the Civil War on the area.

As part of the Battlefield Series, interpreters lead two-hour

programs that provide a more in-depth look at specific aspects of the Union triumph. Other popular offerings are the Battle of Cedar Creek Tour, which is a car-caravan driving tour including stops at significant sites; and the History at Sunset programs, which are held on Fridays during the warmer months and highlight sites not normally open to the general public.

Groups also can tour the garden and grounds of the historical Belle Grove Plantation and see other significant sites, such as the Ramseur Monument, the Vermont Monument, the New York Monument and Mount Carmel Cemetery.

For more information, visit **nps.gov/cebe** or call **+1.540.869.3051**. —P.H.



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Belle Grove Plantation

Greece's first contemporary art museum gets new home

The Athens art scene added another gem when Greece's first contemporary art museum, the EMST National Museum of Contemporary Art, moved into its permanent home in October 2016.

The museum is housed in a repurposed brewery, and in a heavily Ancient Greek art-prone society, its modern art has

contributed quite a unique element to Greek culture. The museum began operating in 2000, but its exhibits were hosted in a plethora of venues around Athens until October.

Its collections include works from top Greek and foreign artists, temporary and traveling exhibits, and, in true contemporary fashion, exhibits that weren't actually there. From

November through January, EMST showcased "Museum Without a Home—An Exhibition of Hospitality," initiated by an international confederation against poverty and inequality. The exhibits were displayed all around Athens, and they included everyday items from shirts and toys to white coffee mugs, designed to bring awareness and hope to humanity.

A current exhibit, "Genii Loci. Greek Art from 1930 to Present," comprises video art, paintings and sculptures by 147 modern and contemporary Greek artists.

Plans are in the works to add more temporary exhibits, host conferences and other events, offer educational programs for children and adults, and add a library and a restaurant.

For more information, visit emst.gr/en or call +21.1101.9000.99. —K.F.



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 **GLOBAL
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What's new at the WWII Museum

This June the National WWII Museum in New Orleans will debut a new exhibit that draws from personal narratives to highlight World War II-era American life. "Arsenal of Democracy" will use those stories, along with artifacts, to provide a poignant look at the war's impact on the home front.

The exhibit will be on display throughout galleries in the attraction's Louisiana Memorial Pavilion. As they explore the Discordant Voices gallery, visitors will hear pre-war domestic debates between governmental leaders. America Besieged features a wraparound screen that will display information on the attack of Pearl Harbor and the U.S. entry into World War II.

The War Affects Every Home section will feature a reconstructed interior of a 1940s house that is representative of a typical home where Americans grew victory gardens, collected for scrap drives and gathered around the radio to learn about the war's progress. Another moving gallery, United but Unequal, will look at the striking incongruity on how racial discrimination in America and the fight against fascism abroad were viewed.



THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM

Other experiential galleries will include Citizens to Soldiers, which will focus on military recruitment and training; Manufacturing Victory, which will use a re-created factory floor to tell the story of America's industrial might; and Manhattan Project, which will offer a look inside the development of the atomic bomb.

For more information, call +1.504.528.1944 (222) or go to nationalww2museum.org. —P.H. 📍


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a fort tour.
We call it
time traveling.



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COURIER'S 2017 DISTINGUISHED DOZEN

NTA tour operators partner with the finest professionals in the travel industry, and the Distinguished Dozen program offers them an avenue to recognize the best of the best. Voting was conducted in 12 categories, and the criteria includes tour suppliers' and destination marketing organizations' quality of product, level of customer service and dedication to relationship-building.

We're pleased to announce the gold, silver and bronze winners for 2017, the sixth year of the program. They include DMOs such as the Jordan Tourism Board, which provided the photo of Wadi Rum on this page, and suppliers that include four-time gold-winning Norwegian Cruise Line, pictured on the cover.



THEATER/SHOW VENUE



BROADWAY INBOUND



Gold: Broadway Inbound/The Shubert Organization

"Broadway Inbound and NTA have been interconnected for decades, with the mutual goal of improving one another. Because NTA operators know us and trust us to get them to Broadway, we have been able to grow and give back via service and sponsorship to strengthen and diversify the association. We plan to continue on this path for years to come."

—Peter Waugh, domestic sales manager



Silver: Blue Man Group



Bronze: Grand Ole Opry Entertainment Group



GROUP-FRIENDLY RESTAURANT



HARD ROCK INTERNATIONAL



Gold: Hard Rock International

"At Hard Rock Cafe we offer our guests a fun, memorable dining experience in each city. No two cafes are alike, with each offering a unique vibe with authentic memorabilia, specific to the city. Hard Rock Cafe has been rocking groups for more than 45 years, and we look forward to serving the group tourism community for many years to come!"

—Tara Hippensteel, director of national tour and travel



Silver: Cracker Barrel Old Country Store



Bronze: Golden Corral



BIG-SHIP OR RIVER CRUISING COMPANY



Gold: Norwegian Cruise Line

"We value our partnership with NTA and love working with the operator channel. Based on their feedback, we created an exclusive program, designed and executed a new group contract, and generated company-wide support. We deliver an outstanding onboard group experience, and it's exciting to see their 'sails' grow with NCL."

—Jodi Danyluk, program manager



Silver: American Queen Steamboat Company



Bronze: Holland America Line



SIGHTSEEING TOURS



Gold: Entertainment Cruises

"Entertainment Cruises is so thrilled to be named as part of *Courier's* 2017 Distinguished Dozen. We highly value both the partnership and the business we receive from NTA operators, and being recognized for this really 'floats our boats.' It's an honor to welcome your tour groups aboard!"

—Liz Gilbert, director of national accounts and travel industry sales



Silver: Boston Duck Tours



Bronze: Old Savannah Tours



OVERSEAS DMO PARTNER



JORDAN TOURISM BOARD



Gold: Jordan Tourism Board

"We like working with NTA tour operators because they are creative and want to widen their clients' vision of the world. Together, we look at ways to build business for both of us, and it is exciting when we come up with new, creative trips that combine experiences unique to Jordan."

Malia Asfour, director



Silver: China National Tourist Office



Bronze: VisitScotland



NORTH AMERICAN DMO PARTNER (CITY OR REGION)



TRAVEL PORTLAND



Gold: Travel Portland

"The caliber of NTA members in our industry provides a seamless partnership full of collaboration and communication. NTA gives us the platform at convention to network and meet with these operators one-on-one in a fun, business-building environment. It's a winning combination!"

—Heather Anderson, international tourism manager



Silver: NYC & Company



Bronze: Visit Savannah



NORTH AMERICAN DMO PARTNER (STATE OR PROVINCE)



Gold: Travel Oregon

"Travel Oregon works in partnership with its statewide partners—Team Oregon—and together we bring Oregon to NTA operators; it's the perfect combination. Whether it's tourism planning tools or inspiration for their next marketing campaign, our aim is to provide resources to support the work of NTA operators."

—Lisa Itel, global sales manager



Silver: New York State Division of Tourism



Bronze: Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism



MUSEUM FOR GROUPS



Gold: Newseum (Washington, D.C.)

"We value our partnership with NTA operators because we work very hard toward the same goal of providing travelers an amazing and unforgettable experience. Our shared love and enthusiasm for the tourism industry make our partnership a winning combination."

—Roxana Rivera, director of sales and marketing



Silver: The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York City)



Bronze: Graceland (Memphis, Tennessee)



CASINO/GAMING PROPERTY



Gold: Mohegan Sun (Uncasville, Connecticut)

"It's great to hear that Mohegan Sun was named as one of Courier's Distinguished Dozen winners again. What sets us apart from everyone else is our staff, from Bus Sales Manager Steve Olender's hands-on approach to selling the property to our greet staff welcoming guests through our doors as soon as they arrive."

—Dennis Clark, director of bus marketing



Silver: Beau Rivage by MGM Resorts (Biloxi, Mississippi)



Bronze: Tulalip Resort Casino (Tulalip, Washington)



CORPORATE HOTEL CHAIN



Gold: Hilton Worldwide

"We love working with our NTA partners because we all share the same vision of making travel the best experience for our guests. With Hilton's 13 unique brands, we know we have something for everyone!"

—Maya Tamim and Janice Weinman



Silver: Drury Hotels



Bronze: Best Western Hotels & Resorts



INDEPENDENT/BOUTIQUE HOTEL PROPERTY



Gold: Gaylord Opryland Hotel & Resort (Nashville, Tennessee)

"Our partnership with NTA helps us keep up with trends so we can stay nimble and keep pushing ourselves toward excellence in servicing groups. NTA pushes us to be better."

—Tina Abellanosa, director of travel industry sales



Silver: The Biltmore Company (Asheville, North Carolina)



Bronze: Hilton Québec (Québec City)



SHOPPING ATTRACTION



Gold: Macy's

Through dedicated initiatives that bring magical experiences to international and domestic shoppers, Macy's offers targeted traveler incentives, customized group experiences, international shipping and special in-store celebrations. Macy's stores are popular shopping destinations that offer world-class fashion, service and value.



Silver: Tanger Properties



Bronze: Tommy Hilfiger

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Mexico Tourism Board
Thursday Luncheon
and Hispanic Travel
Market Fiesta



Norwegian Cruise Line
Wednesday Luncheon,
Fiesta and Profile
Form Notebook



NYC Center Stage
Monday Luncheon



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Tuesday Luncheon



GOLD



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Chair Reception



Team Texas
Refreshments: Soft Drinks



Tour Colorado
Refreshments



TourGuide Solutions
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**Virginia Beach
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VISIT Milwaukee
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BRONZE



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Profile Form Notebook and
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**Campbell County
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**Chattanooga Convention
& Visitors Bureau**
Travel Exchange Daily



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FTA Breakfast



The Group Tour Company
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Breakfast Bistro



**Guide Service of
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Profile Form Notebook



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Profile Form Notebook



Visit San Antonio
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“Phoenix is the urban heart of Arizona and the sunniest metropolis in the U.S. Yet, amid the bustle, you’ll still find cowboy culture, rugged mountains and the kind of cactus most people only see in cartoons. With diverse culinary and entertainment selections, 320 days of sunshine a year, and great hiking and outdoor activities, the city is a breathtaking place for groups.”

—Trish Lanteigne, Visit Phoenix

For more, reach out to Visit Phoenix Tourism Manager George Herrera at gherrera@visitphoenix.com or go to visitphoenix.com.



VISIT PHOENIX

Phoenix museums highlight history, culture and nature

We reached out to Trish Lanteigne of Visit Phoenix for recommendations on some of the city's group-friendly attractions. She suggests these museums for getting acquainted with the refined side of Phoenix:



The **Heard Museum** displays historical and contemporary works of American Indian art. In addition to the collections in its 12 exhibition galleries, the museum offers educational programming and hosts festivals for the community. Upcoming exhibits include “Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera” (April 10–Aug. 20) and “Rick Bartow: Things You Know but Cannot Explain” (April 22–July 9). During the former, 33 works by the famed Mexican artists will be making their only North American tour stop, and historical photographs of the painters will be displayed. The latter is a career retrospective of Oregon artist Rick Bartow’s work across a variety of mediums. heard.org



The **Phoenix Art Museum** is an encyclopedic art museum that includes work from the Americas, Asia and Europe across mediums such as photography, painting, fashion and design. Groups can arrange for tours of the museum’s highlights or its special exhibitions, and the attraction can also book docents for one-hour presentations outside of the museum on requested topics. An upcoming exhibit, “The Logic of the Copy” (Dec. 2–April 22, 2018), looks at the ways in which artists have duplicated and manipulated photographs through the art form’s history. phxart.org



The **Musical Instrument Museum** displays instruments from around the world, preserves historical music-making devices and welcomes guests to make their own music in interactive exhibits. Groups can book a VIP tour, which includes a behind-the-scenes look of the museum’s collection of instruments, a walk through the backstage of its performance space and detailed information about its curator’s work. Tours can also include lunch at the museum’s Café Allegro. mim.org



The **Desert Botanical Garden** offers self-paced and guided tours of its plant life and exhibition spaces. Specialty group tours focus on birds of the Southwest, plants and people of the Sonoran Desert, photo safaris, and evening nighttime flashlight tours. Another activity for groups is the Taste of the Southwest Cooking Demo, which shows how native plants can be used for food and is followed by a private meal made with locally sourced produce. Groups can also book tickets for the attraction’s Music in the Garden concert series. dbg.org

Area chefs serve local twists on comfort foods and fine dining

"Phoenix has been gaining national attention for its thriving culinary scene," says Lanteigne. "Just recently, Chef Silvana Salcido Esparza's Barrio Café Gran Reserva landed a spot on OpenTable's '100 Best Restaurants in America' for 2016 list." Silvana is a four-time nominee for the prestigious James Beard Award.

Lanteigne recommends that curious epicureans check out the following spots for inspired dining and drinks:

The Arrogant Butcher serves sophisticated comfort foods in downtown Phoenix and offers groups four private dining spaces, with configurations that can accommodate up to 100 guests. The menu is replete with grilled seafood, smoked meats, charcuterie and cheeses from small creameries.

Cobra Arcade Bar entertains its guests with a collection of 40 vintage arcade games, including such canonical entries as "Galaga," "Donkey Kong," "Ms. Pac-Man" and "Q-bert." If the esteem of seeing your name atop the high-scorers list of your favorite game isn't enough to get you in the door, Cobra offers 14 beers on tap and a list of video-game-inspired cocktails.

DeSoto Central Market offers a gourmet food hall spearheaded by an award-winning chef," says Lanteigne. "It's a mixed-use entertainment district in an adaptive reuse project." Dining options range from Mexican-Asian fusion at Adobo Dragon to coffee, tea and pastries at Tea & Toast Co. The attraction hosts regular events, including Latin dance lessons, free yoga, speak-easy nights and First Friday art walks.

Barrio Cafe Gran Reserva is an intimate space (seating for about two dozen total) that offers fine dining inspired by traditional Mexican flavors of Baja California. The restaurant complements its multi-course tasting menu with a selection of wines from Mexico, and the team behind it and Chef Esparza's other restaurants can cater special events off-site.



The Arrogant Butcher



Cobra Arcade Bar



Barrio Cafe Gran Reserva

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TO DISCOVER GREATER
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Explore Phoenix's neighboring cities

Phoenix serves as a great hub-and-spoke destination for neighboring cities, including Scottsdale and Glendale.



GLENDALÉ CVB

Go from wildlife to outer space in Glendale

"Glendale and Arizona's West Valley is a region ripe with sweeping vistas, traditional charm and chic touches of the urban, modern world," says Danielle Dutsch, national sales manager for the Glendale CVB.

Groups can explore all kinds of extremes, says Dutsch. "Visitors can go from wildlife to outer space, with the Wildlife World Zoo, Safari & Aquarium—specializing in African and South American animals—and the Challenger Space Center for a simulated mission and stargazing at Arizona's dark-sky events."

Glendale is also emerging as a destination for active travelers. "We've had lots of requests for runs," says Dutsch. "Recently we hosted a Santa Hustle, with thousands of Santas and elves chasing cookies throughout the Westgate Entertainment District." March brings the Kiss Me I'm Irish Run and Kilt Run to the city. "We've also finalized a bike tour called the Tour de Cure, an American Diabetes Association cycling event."

To learn more about Glendale and its attractions, contact Dutsch at ddutsch@visitglendale.com or go to visitglendale.com.

Adventure and the arts in Scottsdale

"Scottsdale is about 30 miles long and 10 miles wide, and within that long, rectangular box are distinctive options," says Jennifer Duffy, director of communications for Experience Scottsdale. "One could spend a morning out horseback riding on a ranch with real cowboys and at night explore art galleries, restaurants and nightlife in a thriving downtown."


Top outdoor attractions include the McDowell Sonoran Preserve, which includes more than 30,000 acres of the McDowell Mountains. The preserve contains more than 55 miles of hiking trails, and guided hikes can range from one to more than 10 miles. Road biking enthusiasts can check out Bespoke Inn, Cafe & Bicycles. In addition to enjoying its accommodations and dining, visitors can see Scottsdale's only artisan bicycle shop, where frames and wheels are created by hand.

Upcoming arts events include the fifth installment of the annual Canal Convergence. The February festival brings large-scale art installments to the city's waterfront. The four-day event includes music, performances and a series of ticketed



CC FLICKR/ANDY BLACKLEDGE: bit.ly/_2jnmfQ

artist talks. This year also marks what would be the 150th birthday of renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright, and events celebrating his achievements will be held throughout the year at his Taliesin West studio.

For more information on these and other Scottsdale attractions, contact Nicole Krekeler, tourism sales manager, at nkrekeler@experiencescottsdale.com or visit experiencescottsdale.com. 



Taliesin West, Frank Lloyd Wright's winter home and school

CC WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/GREG O'BIERNE: bit.ly/2l5pnTZ



DAN HARPER

Cozy in Canada: Costumed interpreters provide historical context at the Festival du Voyageur, a popular event held each February in Winnipeg, Manitoba. To get more itinerary ideas for western Canadian provinces—in chunks of five—turn to page 50.

Atlantic Coast	38
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Armenia, Greece and Turkey	52
Belgium, France and the Netherlands	53

Atlantic Coast

COMPILED BY GABE WEBB



Learn Miami's neighborhoods through tasty tours

Miami Culinary Tours offers treks through the city, and each tour takes an in-depth look at the culinary traditions of a particular neighborhood. "We offer more than just food," says the company's owner, Grace Della. "Our tours are about local culture, history and architecture. Our guides are trained for months specifically to conduct culinary tours."

The South Beach Food Tour includes Latin, European and American comfort foods. Featured dishes include crispy empanadas, fresh ceviche, beef ropa vieja and gelato served in settings as diverse as an Art Deco dining room and Gloria Estefan's Old Havana establishment. For a more in-depth taste of Old Havana, groups can take a tour of that area and sample cocktails, cubanos and ice cream.

"We can accommodate up to 120 people, divided into smaller groups, starting on the same day at the same time," says Della. Tours can also be adjusted to accommodate guests' dietary needs.

For more information, contact Della at grace@food305.com or go to miamiculinarytours.com.



Spring and winter festivals keep Amelia Island cool

“Northeast Florida’s coastal treasure, Amelia Island is a barrier island rich in colorful history and breathtaking natural beauty,” says Kaitlin Harris, who works with the Amelia Island Tourism Development Council. “The island is home to Fernandina Beach, once a vibrant Victorian seaport village and now a charming downtown district of eclectic shops, attractions and eateries.”

The area hosts a variety of annual festivals, including these three:

Restaurant Week

This 10-day culinary showcase in January offers visitors special lunch and dinner menus from participating local restaurants. Unique dining experiences are held throughout the week. This year’s festivities included a Distiller’s Dinner with a local chef explaining the process of making spirits and teaching diners about pairing rum, gin, vodka and whisky with food.

Concours Week

Formally known as the Amelia Island Concours d’Elegance, this March festival is a car enthusiast’s dream. More than 300 rare vehicles from private collectors around the world are on display at the Golf Club of Amelia Island and the Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island. Races and auto auctions are also held during the event.

The Isle of Eight Flags Shrimp Fest

This May event has been a staple of Fernandina Beach for more than 50 years, and visitors will find much more than myriad preparations of the headlining crustacean. Arts and crafts, antiques, local musicians and fireworks are all part of the celebration.

Concours Week



For more on Amelia Island attractions, contact Gil Langley of the Amelia Island Tourism Development Council at glangley@ameliaisland.com or visit ameliaisland.com.



Museums, dining, maritime history, waterfront cruises and shopping make Norfolk, Virginia a distinct destination offering a variety of itineraries for your group to enjoy. With so much to see and do, the possibilities are endless.

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In-depth history in the Outer Banks

The Outer Banks comprises a 130-mile stretch of islands along the coast of North Carolina. Visitors to these islands will find small fishing towns, sandy spots to relax and these two historical attractions:

The Lost Colony is an outdoor drama that tells the story of the Roanoke colony. English settlers landed at the site in 1587, and in 1590 they disappeared without leaving any significant clues behind. In addition to the regular performances, the attraction also offers interactive ghost tours of the grounds on Roanoke Island.

Chicamacomico Lifesaving Station on Hatteras Island is a historical attraction where visitors can learn about the early days of the U.S. Coast Guard. Groups can arrange for private tours, and the public can watch demonstrations of early nautical life-saving drills or hear costumed guides tell stories from the station's past.

For more on the Outer Banks, contact Lorrie Love of the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau at love@outerbanks.org or go to outerbanks.org.



Chicamacomico Lifesaving Station

OUTER BANKS VISITORS BUREAU

Your DMO partners in the Atlantic Coast region

DMOs throughout the Atlantic Coast region are happy to work with NTA tour operators to craft itineraries.

Florida

Amelia Island Tourism Development Council
NTA Contact: Gil Langley
ameliaisland.com

Daytona Beach Area CVB
Leda Beever
daytonabeach.com

Florida's Space Coast Office of Tourism
Eric Garvey
visitspacecoast.com

Greater Fort Lauderdale CVB
Caitlan Etchevers
sunny.org

Islamorada Chamber of Commerce
Judy Hull
islamoradachamber.com

St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & the Beaches VCB
Evelyn Vazquez
floridashistoriccoast.com

Georgia

Visit Tybee Island
Kim Webster
visittybee.com

North Carolina

Outer Banks Visitors Bureau
Lorrie Love
outerbanks.org

South Carolina

Charleston Area CVB
Jennifer Aiken
charlestoncvb.com

Myrtle Beach Area CVB
Sandy Haines
myrtlebeachgroups.com

Virginia

Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance
Vivian Bunting
grouptourswilliamsburg.com

Newport News Tourism Development Office
Barb Kleiss
newport-news.org

Virginia Beach CVB
Jim Coggin
visitviriniabeach.com/grouptour

VisitNorfolk
Melissa Hopper
visitnorfolktoday.com

Seafaring and spirits in Newport News

Barb Kleiss, group marketing manager for the Newport News (Virginia) Tourism Development Office, highlights her city's location as a selling point to tour operators. "We're less than 400 miles from many major U.S. cities, including Washington, D.C.; Baltimore; Philadelphia; and New York," she says. "We're next door to Williamsburg, and Virginia Beach is just a short drive away."

Many of the area's attractions introduce visitors to Newport News' nautical history. "The coastal Virginia region has the largest naval base in the world, plus we're the gateway to the sea, so it's a fitting location for the world-renowned Mariners' Museum," says Kleiss. The museum uses displays of handcrafted models, wooden figureheads, paintings and small boats to educate the public about seafaring throughout history.

Newport News has also welcomed its first craft-distilling operation. Ironclad Distillery Co. opened its bourbon micro-distillery in downtown Newport News last year. The company's name is a nod to the ironclad ships of the U.S. Civil War, and the distillery operates from a 102-year-old dry goods warehouse near the site where the USS Monitor and CSS Virginia faced off in the first battle between the new iron vessels.

For more, contact Kleiss at bkleiss@nnva.gov or go to newport-news.org.



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Great Frontier

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

Wild about Wyoming

Tour operators bringing groups to Wyoming typically feature Yellowstone, the Grand Tetons and the Jackson Hole area as the centerpieces for their itineraries. Beyond those northwestern outposts, Campbell County and Carbon County are two destinations that offer expanded adventures and historical attractions in other parts of the state.



Frontier Auto Museum

CAMPBELL COUNTY CVB

Campbell County

The basics: Campbell County is situated in the high plains region of northeastern Wyoming between Devils Tower National Monument and the rugged Big Horn Mountains.

Top attractions: The region's history is on display at three diverse attractions: the Wright Centennial Museum, the Rockpile Museum and the Frontier Auto Museum in Gillette. A visit to the Eagle Butte Coal Mine and Dry Fork Station provides a glimpse at why Campbell County is known as the Energy Capital of the Nation. As part of tours of the state-of-the-art, coal-fired plant, guides detail the production processes and describe how generations of locals have helped supply power throughout the United States.

Outdoor favorites: True to its cowboy heritage and agrarian roots, the county is a top spot for ranch tours. The Durham Buffalo Ranch near Wright offers programs that allow travelers to see buffalo up close and get a look at the inner workings of a modern-day farm. At the CAM-PLEX Multi-Event Facility in Gillette, they can enjoy a traditional Western rodeo most weeks of the year.

Annual festival: Donkey Creek Festival (June 23-24)

Contact Mary Silvernell of the Campbell County CVB at mary@visitgillettewright.com or go to visitgillettewright.com to get more information.



Sunrise at Lookout Lake

CARBON COUNTY VISITORS COUNCIL/BRETT DEACON

Carbon County

The basics: Located in the south-central part of the state, Carbon County covers 3,400 square miles. Its 10 main cities are spread across wide open spaces that are home to a variety of natural and historical sites.

Top attractions: Saratoga's renowned Hobo Hot Springs, with waters ranging from 101 to 120 degrees Fahrenheit, combines soothing soaks and rustic charm. Two other popular spots are the Wyoming Frontier Prison, featuring guided tours through the cell block, and Outlaw Stop, which is home to a dance hall that was frequented by Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch.

Outdoor favorites: Fishing is a major local pastime, and a favored area is the world-famous Miracle Mile. This stretch of the North Platte River near the Seminoe Reservoir is renowned for its great fly fishing and abundance of large trout. Travelers can take in sweeping mountain views and see native animals—such as pronghorn antelope and bald eagles—during hikes along the Continental Divide.

Annual festivals: Woodchopper's Jamboree and Rodeo (June 17-18), Sierra Madre Mountain Man Rendezvous & Living History Days (July 22-23)

Contact Leslie Jefferson of the Carbon County Visitors Council at director@wyomingcarboncounty.com or go to wyomingcarboncounty.com to learn more.



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MONTANA'S  TRAILHEAD

A feast for the eyes, ears and stomach in Fargo and Bismarck

“Whether you are a foodie, a shopper, a festival lover or enjoy creative art, you will find North Dakota’s urban down-towns to your liking, especially in Fargo and Bismarck,” says Deanne Cunningham, group travel marketing manager for North Dakota Tourism. “Our native flavors are infused into the cuisine at local restaurants, which are gaining attention from visitors.”

One of Fargo’s most eclectic restaurants is Vinyl Taco. Patrons can enjoy traditional Mexican dishes and listen to tasty tunes from a variety of artists whose albums are played on vintage turntables. HoDo Restaurant, located in the Hotel Donaldson, offers organic entrees and farm-to-table favorites in an upscale atmosphere. Over in Bismarck, the capital city’s cocktail scene is buzzing, and two of the top places are Humpback Sally’s, which specializes in craft drinks and small-plate food, and Lüft, a sky bar that overlooks downtown.

According to Cunningham, interspersed with each destination’s culinary hot spots are a range of interesting shops. O’Day Cache in Fargo specializes in international home décor and fashions, and Bismarck boasts three popular boutiques: Lula B’s, Lillian’s and Sole Interiors.

In addition to diners and shoppers, art lovers will find a lot to their liking in both cities. “Local artists are sharing their talents with creative designs and patterns on unique places such as Fargo’s bison statues and Bismarck’s utility boxes and alleyways,” adds Cunningham.

The iconic Fargo Theatre, which stands as the cultural anchor in the city’s downtown area, stages a full schedule of plays and shows independent films. At the Plains Art Museum, visitors can see hundreds of paintings, drawings and sculpture by celebrated Midwestern artists, along with international works that are part of special exhibits.

One of Bismarck’s newest attractions is an old alley that has been transformed into an outdoor gallery featuring murals and other works by local artists. Devotees of the performing arts can see headlining bands and popular comedians at the Bismarck Event Center.

To learn more, contact Cunningham at decunningham@nd.gov or go to ndtourism.com.



Fargo's Aunie the painted buffalo



HoDo Restaurant in Fargo



Shopping in Bismarck

VISIT FARGO-MOORHEAD

NORTH DAKOTA TOURISM

TOP LEFT: NORTH DAKOTA TOURISM/DUANE STRAND



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AKTALAKOTA.ORG

Celebrate South Dakota's Lakota culture

The Akta Lakota Museum and Cultural Center is located in Chamberlain, South Dakota, on the campus of a residential school for American Indian children. In the Lakota language, Akta Lakota means “honor the people,” and the museum honors and promotes the traditions and heritage of the families served by the school.

The attraction's exhibits are arranged in a manner reflecting the tribe's philosophy that all things spiritual are inside a circle, or *Hocoka*. Following that pattern, the exhibits detail the lives of the Lakota people in four periods: prior to Euro-American contact, after the arrival of settlers and traders, during the time of broken promises from the U.S. government, and today.

Groups can see culturally relevant art, artifacts and educational displays, as well as a gallery that gives native artists a place to display and sell their work. During strolls around

the property, they can visit the Medicine Wheel Garden and reflect on a series of Lakota prayers that are displayed on interpretive panels resembling buffalo hides.

There is no entrance fee to the museum, which is open year-round and has extended hours from May to October. Guided tours are available, or guests can browse on their own and view a 23-minute movie, “Native Americans: The People of the Plains.”

A popular time to visit is during the American Indian Day and Powwow, which will take place Sept. 14–16. Held annually since 1976, this event showcases many aspects of the Lakota culture. There is a communal banquet featuring traditional foods, Indian drum group competitions, dance contests for Lakota children, tours of the school's campus and more.

For more information, contact Dixie Thompson, museum director, at dthompson@stjo.org or visit aktalakota.org.

Town Pump offers lodging near outdoor recreation, Montana parks

Town Pump Hotel Group operates 11 hotels and an RV park in Montana, with an additional hotel in Idaho Falls, Idaho. Paula Ruark, the company's director of sales and marketing, says her organization offers an exceptional level of hospitality to its tour groups.

"We truly love working with tour operators and taking care of the group booking from beginning to end," Ruark says. "In all our locations, tour guests will be greeted by a member of our management team. We will literally roll out red carpet, step on the bus and greet the group ... and provide a complimentary welcome reception and make sure all guests are comfortable and happy during their stay."

The company's list of Montana hotels includes a pair of award-winners. The Town Pump Sleep Inn & Suites in Miles City was one of the 10 TripAdvisor GreenLeader hotels in the United States, and the Comfort Suites Helena received Choice Hotels International's Platinum Award, which places it in the top 3 percent of the brand's properties.

"Another popular location is the Shelby, Montana, Comfort Inn, which is only 80 miles from the east entrance to Glacier



National Park ... and 30 miles from the Canadian border," she says. "This hotel recently went through a complete renovation that included an exterior facelift and the addition of 58 all-suite rooms, a breakfast room, a lobby, and an indoor pool and hot tub."

For more information, email Ruark at paular@townpump.com or visit townpumphotels.com.

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With two hotels, a golf course, a spa and 100,000 square feet of gaming space, the Coeur d'Alene Casino Resort provides both relaxation and excitement for travelers visiting northern Idaho.

Discounts on rooms, golf and spa services are available, as are other special perks—such as free membership in the Coyote Rewards Club—for tour group members. The club offers rewards for every play on the resort's more than 1,600 slots, video blackjack and other machines.

“Our tribal hospitality is a warm welcoming into our home,” says Dee Dee McGowan, the property's tour bus manager. “We greet every group and hold a coffee and cookie reception, and we also see them off at departure with a bag of souvenirs to draw as prizes on their trip home.”

The resort has a strong regional following, as the majority of groups McGowan works with come from Canada, Montana, California and inland Washington and Oregon.

“Most groups book a year or more out,” she says. “Some will call a few months out to add more trips, and we normally are able to accommodate them.”

For visitors who fly into Spokane, Washington, the resort provides free transportation from Spokane International Airport. And with a minimum four-night stay, groups can enjoy a complimentary private charter boat cruise on Coeur d'Alene Lake.

For more information, contact McGowan at wmcgowan@cdacasino.com or visit cdacasino.com.



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Your new partners in the Black Hills

Last year NTA welcomed three new tour supplier members in the western part of South Dakota, two lodging properties and one attraction. Here is a look at each of these businesses:



HOLLY HAYES

Chapel in the Hills

Rapid City

NTA contact: Craig Lewis
chapel-in-the-hills.org

Nestled at the foot of the Black Hills on the western edge of Rapid City, Chapel in the Hills provides a quiet retreat for travelers. Groups can tour the elaborate wooden chapel, which was carefully crafted using the exact blueprint of Borgund Stavkirke, a famous church in Norway.



LODGEATMOUNTRUSHMORE.COM

The Lodge at Mount Rushmore

Keystone

NTA contact: Mark Arend
lodgeatmountrushmore.com

Located just off the main highway leading into Keystone, this property will debut the results of a major renovation next month. Travelers can enjoy the indoor pool, business center and fitness facilities, and each of the hotel's 50 rooms includes pillowtop beds, free WiFi and more.



PALMERGULCH.COM

Mount Rushmore Lodge at Palmer Gulch

Hill City

NTA contact: Mike Atkinson
palmergulch.com

What started as one man's dream to bring an exclusive golf course to the Black Hills in the 1920s has become a high-end resort nearly 90 years later. Guests can choose from the spacious rooms in The Lodge or book a stay at one of the modern cabins. Deluxe RV sites also are available. 📍





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Western Canada

COMPILED BY BOB ROUSE

5 for 5

How do you tackle a Canadian landmass that stretches north from Vancouver to the Arctic Ocean and east to the Hudson Bay? In chunks of five, that's how. We found out what Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the Yukon offer to group travelers—in chunks of five.

5 British Columbia driving tours

1. Hot Springs Seven days, seven hot springs. This 529-mile drive through BC's Kootenay Rockies region visits natural pools ranging from lavish resorts to secret dips in the woods. Groups riding through stunning lake and mountain scenery enjoy plenty of history, wildlife viewing and outdoor adventure.

2. Great Northern The legendary Alaska Highway is the primary pathway of this eight- to 14-day, odyssey through Northern BC and into the Yukon. Highlights include ancient stands of totems, legendary fishing, glaciers, the northern lights and First Nations culture.

3. Heritage Discovery Starting and finishing in Vancouver (or Victoria), this one- to two-week route showcases the variety of BC's landscapes and seascapes, from Gold Rush and cowboy country to northern forests rich with First Nations culture, and from an Inside Passage cruise among fjords and islands to orca watching and beachcombing on Vancouver Island.

4. Pacific Marine A good choice for time-pressed foodies, this route begins and ends in Victoria. With just a few hours of driving, travelers enjoy surf-tossed beaches, old-growth forests, wine country, some of Canada's best restaurants and all the delights of BC's capital.

Halcyon Hot Springs Village and Spa



DESTINATION BC/DAVE HEATH

5. Coastal This route includes seascapes, beaches and drift-wood all the way up Vancouver Island's eastern shore and back down the Sunshine Coast. Starting in Vancouver, the route includes four ferry rides and showcases funky little arts towns, intriguing First Nations sites, wineries and two major cities.

For driving tour details, email Destination British Columbia's Sandy Reid at sandy.reid@destinationbc.ca or visit destinationbc.ca.

5 famous festivals in Winnipeg, Manitoba

1. Festival du Voyageur (February) Western Canada's largest winter party celebrates the history and spirit of Winnipeg's fur-trading roots. During the 10-day event, visitors can savor authentic French-Canadian cuisine, enjoy music acts and watch costumed interpreters bring the recreated Fort Gibraltar to life.



Manito Ahbee Festival

DAN HARPER

2. Manito Ahbee Festival (May) This festival shines as one of North America's largest powwows. Groups become immersed in indigenous arts and culture at the marketplace, and they can watch square dance and jiggling competitions.

3. Winnipeg Folk Festival (July) Soak up the sounds of top folk, indie and world artists under the sunny prairie blue skies, surrounded by music lovers and positive vibes, and you've got Folk Fest, held just outside Winnipeg in Birds Hill Provincial Park.

4. Winnipeg Fringe Festival (July) A culture-culture tour group's dream, this independent theater festival takes over Winnipeg with quirky, moving performances. A buzzing market, free outdoor stage and vibrant beer garden area create a party atmosphere in the historical Exchange District.

5. Folklorama (August) The world's largest and longest-running multicultural festival features pavilions representing different countries. At the pavilions, groups can enjoy traditional food, drink and cultural displays, along with dazzling live shows highlighting folk music and dance.

To get details on these festive events, contact Sarah Robinson of Tourism Winnipeg at sarah@tourismwinnipeg.com or visit winnipeggroups.com.

5 reasons to yearn for Yukon

1. Easy access to wilderness Yukon Territory is well-known for vast and spectacular wilderness, but most people don't understand just how easy it is to experience. Visitors can enjoy breathtaking scenery as part of outings that range from half-day hikes and long backcountry expeditions to roadside pullovers.

2. Midnight sun and northern lights The Yukon sky is always alive. The midnight sun overpowers nighttime from late May to early August, and the magic of the northern lights delights visitors from around the world from mid-August to April.

3. Road trip nirvana With more than 3,000 miles of well-maintained roadways with light traffic loads, the Yukon invites travelers to explore its wide open spaces in the comfort of their own vehicle—or in a rented RV.

4. Klondike Gold Rush The 1898 event put the Yukon on the world map, and groups can relive the travel routes, history and experiences of those daring Stampeders while enjoying all the creature comforts of modern amenities.



TOURISM YUKON

5. First Nations culture The Yukon is home to 14 First Nations tribes, each with a unique culture, history and story to share. Guests learn more at cultural interpretive centers and festivals that celebrate these rich traditions.

For more information, email Annie-Claude Dupuis of Tourism Yukon at annie-claude.dupuis@gov.yk.ca or visit travelyukon.com.

5 uniquely Saskatchewan experiences



TOURISM SASKATCHEWAN

1. Royal Canadian Mounted Police Heritage Centre Since 1885, all Mounties have been trained in Regina. Guests can hop in the saddle of the virtual reality ride or enjoy a guided tour by tram. On Tuesday evenings in the summer, visitors delight in the pomp and pageantry of the Sunset-Retreat Ceremony, which features cadets dressed in the famous Red Serge.

2. The Rемаi Modern Art Gallery of Saskatchewan Opening this fall in Saskatoon as the most visionary new art museum in North America, the Rемаi will feature award-winning architecture and the world's most comprehensive collection of Picasso linocuts, with 23 ceramic works from the Spanish master.

3. Little Manitou Lake The lake's briny waters, with natural therapeutic properties, are unique to the western hemisphere. Nearby is Danceland—a circa 1928 dance hall famous for its maple dance floor built over a cushion of horse hair—which serves up buffet dinners and old-time dance parties.

4. Wanuskewin Heritage Park Located just north of Saskatoon, the site has been a gathering site for Northern Plains Indians for more than 6,000 years. The park offers interpretation, dance performances, galleries and a restaurant, and groups can customize their visit with an elder greeting or a dreamcatcher workshop.

5. Lajord Hutterite Colony The Hutterites are an ethno-religious group who live and farm communally. Visitors learn about the life, spirituality and culture of the colony, located 30 minutes from Regina.

For more information, contact Tourism Saskatchewan's Amy McInnis at amy.mcinnis@tourismsask.com or visit tourismsaskatchewan.com.

5 Alberta winter adventures

1. Snowshoe and Fondue Tour Sunshine Village, a world-class resort in the Canadian Rockies, offers a signature snowshoe experience that takes guests above the tree line to a wintery landscape deep in the heart of Banff National Park. (Note: If you can walk, you can snowshoe.)

2. Johnston Canyon ice walk Groups traverse a series of steel catwalks to get spectacular views of the canyon. Friendly, certified guides hand out hot chocolate and maple cookies while describing the area's history and geology.

3. Heli snowshoeing An adventure with Rockies Heli Canada includes a 20-minute heli-tour of the white-capped Rockies and a guided backcountry snowshoe trek with access to ridge lines and mountain passes that are impossible to get to any other way.

4. Hockey at Rogers Place This world-class arena just opened in Edmonton, and it's a hot place to catch a National Hockey League game. Dining is available before or after the game at any of seven on-site restaurants.

5. Maligne Canyon ice walk and skiing

On the ice-walk tour, guests explore frozen waterfalls, ice caves and incredible ice formations during a two-mile (mostly downhill) walk. Skiers in the group can enjoy the slopes in the morning, then join in for the afternoon ice walk.

To get details and itinerary suggestions, contact Travel Alberta's Desiree Gibson at desiree.gibson@travelalberta.com or visit travelalberta.com. 



TOURISM JASPER

Armenia, Greece and Turkey

COMPILED BY GABE WEBB

Armenia's Khor Virap Monastery with views of Mt. Ararat



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Travel in the footsteps of Noah

NTA welcomed Travel Armenia, a Yerevan-based tour operator, to its membership in 2016. The company's cultural and faith-based tours have been showing groups and FITs the Eurasian nation for 13 years.

Travel Armenia's "Land of Christianity" itinerary is an eight-day program that focuses on the history of the religion in the country. The tour includes visits to Armenian apostolic churches that date back more than a millennium,

to a 13th-century monastery and to a cognac factory near Mt. Ararat, the peak where Noah's Ark is said to have run aground. The company's "Biblical Armenia" itinerary also visits Ararat, in addition to temples that date to the first century A.D.

To find out more about Travel Armenia and its tours, contact Anna Davidyan at a.davidyan@travelarmenia.am or go to travelarmenia.am.

Karavan Travel builds itineraries with 'Unique Moments'



Bodrum Castle

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Karavan Travel is an Istanbul-based tour operator that takes visitors to archaeological, religious and other scenic destinations throughout Turkey and Greece.

"Karavan's reputation is based on supplying innovative programs with competitive rates," says Coskun Uygun, director of Karavan Travel. "In light of this, we have introduced 'Unique Moments' on our tours, such as private visits of Sainte-Sophie [Hagia Sophia], the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum and Bodrum Castle." The company's Unique Moments options also include culinary tour stops: street food, Turkish coffee and baklava, wine tastings and private meals in Ephesus, and home cooking in Cappadocia.

"Our most popular tour is the 11-day, 10-night Classical Turkey Tour," says Uygun. "This tour starts and ends in Istanbul, but it gives our passengers the chance to visit the most popular sites in Istanbul, Ankara, Cappadocia, Pamukkale, Izmir (Ephesus) and Çanakkale."

Karavan also offers a faith-based tour of the Seven Churches of Revelation. On this eight-day itinerary, travelers will learn about the biblical Book of Revelation and see other sights mentioned in the text of the Bible. "You will learn the history of Christianity while walking through sites such as the ruined city of Ephesus, Troy, Gallipoli, Troas, Thyatira, Pergamum, Sardis, Laodicea and Colossae."

Other itineraries include cruises that visit Turkish cities and Greek islands.

To learn more about Karavan's tours of Turkey and Greece, contact Uygun at coskun.uygun@karavantravel.com or visit karavantravel.com.

Belgium, France and the Netherlands

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

Feting the Flemish masters

Belgium is gearing up to pay tribute to its renowned artists through the “Flemish Masters: 2018–2020” program. The three-year celebration focuses on the lives and legacies of famous native sons Jan van Eyck, Pieter Bruegel and Peter Paul Rubens, who were active in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries, respectively.

“For over 250 years Flanders-Belgium has been a melting pot of art, creativity, science, and inventions,” says Marco Frank, trade manager with the Tourist Office for Flanders-Brussels. “The ‘Flemish Masters’ project has been established to help inquisitive travelers learn about our artists and about themselves.”

The program kicks off by highlighting Rubens and the city of Antwerp in 2018. Both Brussels and Antwerp were influential to Bruegel, who will be featured in 2019. The event closes in 2020 with an emphasis on van Eyck and the city of Ghent.

A wide range of programs, exhibits, special events and lectures are part of the commemoration, and Flanders will be the hub for many of the activities. During a visit to the northern Belgian region, visitors can walk through the actual



VISITFLANDERS

house where Rubens lived and worked, see the landscapes that inspired Bruegel, and discover exact locations depicted in van Eyck works.

To find out more, email Frank at marco.frank@visitflanders.com or go to visitflanders.com.

Schussing around the French Alps



LES3VALLEES.COM

A sunny winter day ... just-right powder on the slopes ... a backdrop of the French Alps. If you are a skier or snowboarder, that probably sounds like the perfect day. It does to Pierre-Yves Mazeaud, owner of French Incoming, a

receptive operator that—among its many tour offerings—arranges ski vacations for groups and FITs.

“There are ski resorts that are family-oriented, ones that are more for the younger crowds with lots of festivals and parties, while others are for serious skiers,” says Mazeaud. “In the French Alps, there is a resort that is right for each and every person, be it Les 3 Vallées, the world’s largest ski area, or Les Karelis, a small car-free resort.”

While a majority of the skiing is done in the Alps of southeastern France, Mazeaud says enthusiasts also can enjoy the slopes of the Pyrenees in the southwest, Les Vosges in the east and Massif Central in south-central France. The heart of the season is January to March, but many resorts open in December and don’t close until April.

To get more information on ski vacations in France, contact Mazeaud at py@french-incoming.com or visit french-incoming.com.

A tasty trip through the Netherlands and Belgium

Ruijs Travel is a Netherlands-based company that specializes in tours of its native country and also offers a number of packages to many other European destinations.

According to Managing Director Corné Ruijs, the demand for culinary-themed and agritourism itineraries is on the rise. He says one of his favorite options is a week-long agricultural tour that includes both the Netherlands and Belgium.

“You go to a small dairy farm—it’s far from ‘mass production’—and after a tour, you taste their fresh products,” he says. “You also sample a more unknown product of the Netherlands, wine, during a visit to a rural vineyard.”

The tour starts and ends in Amsterdam, and in between travelers get to explore Maastricht, Bruges and The Hague. The days combine sightseeing with local dining and epicurean adventures.

“This trip includes the can’t-miss highlights, but more important you will visit some less-famous sites that give you better insights about how the people in Holland and Belgium truly live,” Ruijs adds.

To learn more, reach out to Ruijs at c.ruijs@ruijstravel.com or visit ruijstravel.com. ☎

Courier's CRUISING GUIDE

Thanks to NTA's expansive list of cruise providers, travelers can experience the beauty of waterways and ports of call around the world. These diverse members range from ones that specialize in partial-day sightseeing cruises to others that put together multi-week excursions. Save this list as a reference guide for your cruise planning.

Maid to order: Tracing its roots back to 1846, when its namesake ship first traversed the Niagara River, Maid of the Mist is known for its tours to the base of legendary Niagara Falls.

Listings in this guide are based on a company's membership category or profile selections. The information was provided by the member contact and was current as of Dec. 15, 2016. Please check NTAonline.com for updated information on NTA-member cruise providers and to learn more about the services they offer.



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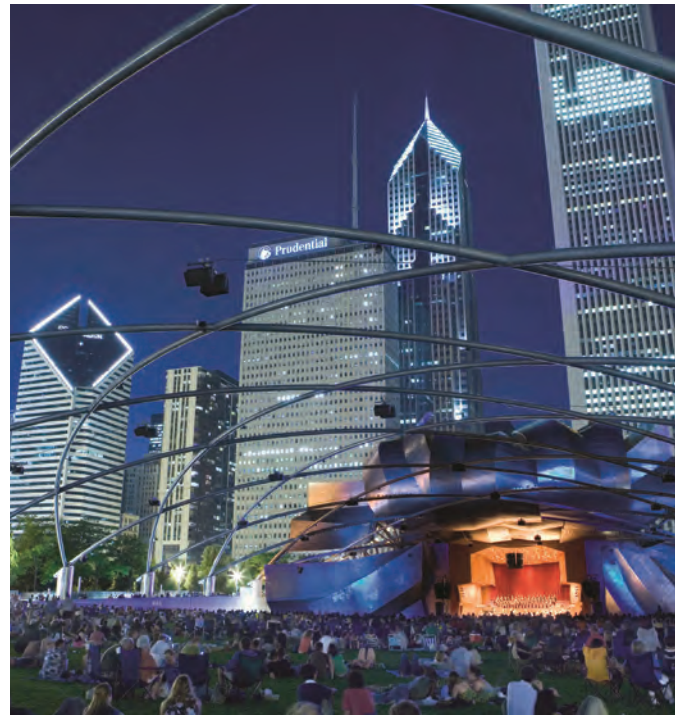
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COMMUNITY



LEFT: GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY, RIGHT: CHOOSE CHICAGO



LEFT: NEWYORKSIGHTSEEING.COM, RIGHT: LAS VEGAS NEWS BUREAU/BRIAN JONES



Oh the visitors you'll welcome: 2016 was a banner year for U.S. inbound tourism. Many destinations across the country welcomed a record-setting number of visitors, including—clockwise from top left (estimated totals in parentheses)—Los Angeles (47.3 million), Chicago (54.1 million), Las Vegas (42.9 million) and New York City (60.0 million).

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SPAM Museum

AUSTIN, MINNESOTA

NTA contact: Savile Lord, manager, SPAM Museum and community relations

Office Phone: +1.507.434.6420

Website: spam.com/museum

NTA member since: 2016

What makes the SPAM Museum such a special place?

We are celebrating the 80th anniversary of SPAM in 2017, and Hormel Foods just celebrated its 125th as a company in 2016. The museum is a showpiece for the town of Austin, something for us all to be proud of because it tells a story of our long history, both as a company and a community.

Also, not a lot of food companies have that personal connection with people. Visitors often have their own SPAM story, and they come, often like a pilgrimage to a sacred space, to share their memories.

What do people experience when they visit the museum?

We provide guided and unguided tours for our visitors. They can learn about the history of SPAM, and about several of the more than 40 countries that sell SPAM across the globe.

What extra things do you offer for groups?

Each of our bus tour guests gets a lei with a SPAM single attached. Hawaiians consume about 7 million cans of SPAM a year, and so we want to acknowledge their love affair and tie it back to where it was made: here in Austin! We also regularly serve SPAMples so that visitors can try one of our 15 varieties.

What was your dream job growing up?

I was raised right outside Washington, D.C., in a small town called Chevy Chase, Maryland. Being that close to the nation's capital, I grew up wanting to be a judge.



What is a destination you visited and loved?

I spent six months in Belize after college and enjoyed it tremendously.

For more information, contact Lord at slord@hormel.com.

Salem Witch Museum

SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

NTA contact: Merry Ward, director of sales

Office Phone: +1.978.744.1692

Website: salemwitchmuseum.com

NTA member since: 1981

Tell me about when the museum was established and why.

The museum was established in 1972 due to the growing interest regarding the history of the witch trials, thanks to actress Elizabeth Montgomery visiting Salem while filming a popular TV sitcom called "Bewitched" and to famed author Arthur Miller's play "The Crucible." Our mission is to be the voice of the innocent victims of the Salem witch trials and of witch hunts happening today.

What makes a visit to the museum a unique experience?

Unlike a typical artifacts museum, here you are immersed in the history of the

witch trials as life-size stage sets are illuminated to a narration around a large auditorium. The exhibit led by museum guides discusses the evolution of witches and witchcraft, and it explains the formula for how a witch hunt could begin and includes examples from the McCarthy hearings and from Japanese internment during World War II. The museum's iconic brownstone building was designed by Minard LaFever, the nationally renowned architect from New York, who was famous for his Gothic Revival churches.

What do you find most interesting about your job?

I'm totally fascinated by the many visitors from other countries. Folks visit from all over the world to learn about Salem's history or just to experience Halloween in Salem!

Where's your favorite place to travel?

I loved visiting San Francisco and Seattle! I have to say, though, that my favorite



places to travel are right here in New England. Long road trips to Vermont, New Hampshire or Maine for a weekend in the woods camping or staying at a little New England Inn are great. I am incredibly excited to visit Albuquerque, New Mexico, later this year.

For more information, contact Ward at merry@salemwitchmuseum.com.

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.

TOUR OPERATORS

Deer USA Inc.

Charles Lu
Baldwin Park, CA 91706 USA
deerusa.com

Kiwi Education Inc.

Eric Ng
Santa Monica, CA 90404 USA
kiwieducation.org

L & L Star Travel Inc.

Lei Liu
New York, NY 11354 USA

MGM Holiday Inc.

Amy Zhao
Burlingame, CA 94010 USA
mgmtourusa.com

Tomorrow Travel Srl.

Antonella Chiaranzelli
Rome, 146 Italy
tomorrowtravel.it

TOUR SUPPLIERS

Albert E. Brumley & Sons

Betsy Brumley
Powell, MO 65730 USA
brumleymusic.com

BASE Entertainment

Lindsey Hull
Las Vegas, NV 89109 USA
baseentertainmentsales.com

Boscolo Travel

Ivan Matta
New York, NY 10028 USA
boscolo.com/us/tours

Concord Hospitality Enterprises

Helene Mould
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309-3713 USA
concordhotels.com

Embassy Suites by Hilton Berkeley Heights

Leila Campisi
Berkeley Heights, NJ 07922 USA
esberkeleyheights.embassysuitesbyhilton.com

Four Winds Casino

Georgia Gessler
New Buffalo, MI 49117 USA
fourwindscasino.com

Group Travel of Branson

Holly Cole
Branson, MO 65616 USA
grouptravelbranson.com

Hotel Edison

Travis Lasher
New York, NY 10036 USA
edisonhotelnyc.com

Interstate Hotels & Resorts

Heather Palentchar
Arlington, VA 22203 USA
interstatehotels.com

Old Sturbridge Village

Michael Arnum
Sturbridge, MA 01566-1138 USA
osv.org

Scarlet Pearl Casino Resort

Rita Blenman-Green
D'Iberville, MS 39540 USA
scarletpearlcasino.com

Variety Cruises

Susan Nissim
New York, NY 10018 USA
varietycruises.com/english

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FareHarbor Holdings

Bora Yavuz
Needham, MA 02494 USA
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Tucson, Arizona
March 28–30, 2019



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CAPITOL HILL**

Washington, D.C.
March 28–29, 2017

LEFT COLUMN, FROM TOP: DAN DONOVAN/EXPLORE ST. LOUIS, VISITSANANTONIO.COM, VISIT MILWAUKEE
RIGHT COLUMN, FROM TOP: CHARLESTON AREA CVB, VISIT TUCSON, CC FLICKR/DUSTIN GAFFKE, bit.ly/28bVZ4

Recognizing ‘distinguished’

BY JOHN STACHNIK, CTP

DISTINGUISHED. What a remarkable word. All of us recognize distinguished people in our lives: a prominent government official, a revered teacher, a highly respected clergy or simply a personal hero. And though NTA recognizes its Distinguished Dozen (see pages 23–29), there is no universal club for distinguished people—no official rules for entry.

The dictionary’s first definition for distinguished is someone “made conspicuous by excellence.” Excellence is a hard thing to get your arms around. There are many good things we see every day, but excellence is not one of them. So to begin the process of elevating a distinguished man, woman or group of people to your very own club, you would need to sort out those who not only stand out, but have gone the additional distance and shown that they possess a truly outstanding talent or quality.

Since this is a business magazine, we should focus on what it takes for business people to become distinguished among their peers. Distinguished people take an organization and propel it to heights greater than its counterparts. Their business success gives their industry more positive visibility, both from within and outside of that industry. And they make sure that individuals associated with them are given the opportunity to succeed.

Distinguished colleagues are cognizant of the needs of others, and their charitable actions solidify their place on a higher level.

An athlete who breaks a record should be considered an excellent athlete, but not necessarily a distinguished one. We need to see what that athlete does beyond the act of breaking a record. Does the athlete take his or her career to another level and help others to achieve excellent goals, thereby becoming better people themselves? Or does that athlete use high achievement solely for financial betterment?

Distinguished colleagues are cognizant of the needs of others, and their charitable actions solidify their place on



a higher level. Surrounding the person is a sense of altruism that is not merely a self-serving means to more success.

“To whom much is given, much is expected” is a popular phrase pointing out that being distinguished comes with a heavy price. Higher standards on all fronts separate the truly distinguished person from the good person.

In addition, this distinction also comes with a humility that is not just an act, but a true belief. Many factors make up the dynamics of a distinguished person, yet in my mind, humility leads the field.

Consider this: Would you rather be known as an “outstanding author” or a “distinguished author?” Most people would prefer the latter.

But you cannot label yourself distinguished. You and I have the privilege to confer that on our peers. It is our duty to place the label on a deserving individual, and what a wonderful honor that is.

We live in a society that needs role models, especially for those who are just entering their field of endeavor. Each of us has a remarkable opportunity to recognize our own roster of distinguished people and strive to emulate their behavior, demeanor and success. 🍷

John Stachnik, CTP, is president and co-founder of Mayflower Tours. A member of NTA for more than five decades, Stachnik served as the association’s president (now titled “chair”) in 1992.



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