# )UKIE

## The city ... is ready!

New York shines from borough to borough

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The crown jewel of River Road: A visit to the Houmas House Plantation and Gardens along Louisiana's River Road allows guests to experience the life of a wealthy 19th-century sugar baron and to learn more about the former working plantation.

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#### **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

#### **JULY ISSUE**

**Destinations** South Central U.S. (Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia); Pacific Northwest (British Columbia, Oregon, Washington); Germany and Switzerland; India

City Spotlight: Louisville, KY

#### **Special Coverage**

Travel Exchange '17 Preview (San Antonio) Guide: Shopping

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**Space Deadline** May 5 Material Deadline May 15



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#### I'VE BEEN THERE BEFORE.

I have reached the point in my *Courier* career where I am writing destination stories for the second time. This news will not impress my editorial colleagues, Pat Henderson and Gabe Webb, who both have written for the magazine for years. It may not impress you, either, dear reader; you might be thinking, "Writing, schmiting." And I get that.

To a word nerd like me, though, writing is processing. Writing about my time in New York City allows me to synthesize what I saw and did there. Choosing words forces me to identify specific thoughts and feelings about an experience, and that process makes the experience richer ... more defined.

Sorry for the deep dive. All of that's to say you're invited to read the City Spotlight on New York City, starting on page 24.

What is especially cool about exploring a destination as a Courier writer is that it puts me closer to you. And not just physically in your space—asking where the restroom is—but also in your world. In your hotel. On your streets. Digging your tours.

To that point, Gabe wrote up his interview with Richard Church, founder of Battered Suitcase (pages 14 and 15).

Richard's company builds tours around UNESCO World Heritage sites, and they keep it real—real local and real sustainable.

We're covering you and your world throughout this issue. Pat highlights spectacular attractions in "Colorful characters and colorful blooms," a good look at good-looking (and historical) homes and gardens. That starts on page 20.

Pat also takes a spin around the U.S. Four Corners states, starting on page 32. Gabe checks in with members in Ontario and Québec, pages 42–43, and I pass along itinerary ideas for Egypt, Israel and Jordan on pages 44–45.

To those of you who catch this issue before (or on the way to) St. Louis, I wish you a pleasant and productive Travel Exchange, and I hope we'll connect. (Mention that you read this letter, and you'll get a *free* handshake!)

If we don't meet in St. Louis, maybe I'll see you in San Antonio. Or heck, have me over to your place for a cold drink and a half-day tour. I'll bring my writing stuff.

Write on,



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On the cover:
New York's skyscrapers
present a stunning face
for a city of five distinct
boroughs and dozens
of neighborhoods to
explore.
Photo:
Tagger Yancey IV





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I HOPE YOU ARE READING THIS ISSUE of *Courier* en route to St. Louis. At the event, you'll find so many new and exciting changes to Travel Exchange this year, along with the familiar folks and features you appreciate. If you aren't headed to St. Louis, you definitely must join us in San Antonio because you will have gone 22 months (since Atlanta) without making those important connections at our convention.

I'm so excited to announce our new director of China Market Services, Lin Wang. He will be managing NTA's China Inbound Program. Lin is a native of Hangzhou, China, and along with his firsthand knowledge of China, he also has extensive expertise in tourism marketing and client relations.

Before joining us, Lin was an account manager for Partner Concepts Inc. He holds a master's degree in tourism administration from The George Washington University and a bachelor's from Fudan University in Shanghai.

There's a photo of Lin on page 8, and you can meet him in person at Travel Exchange.

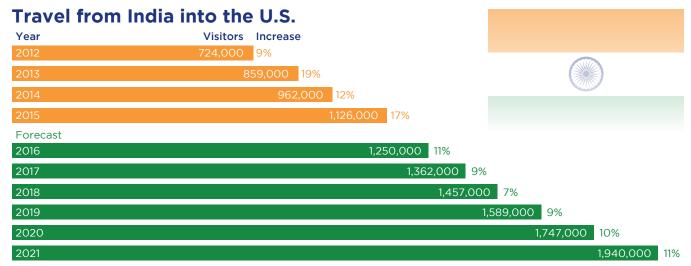
When I see you in St. Louis, I will have just returned from Delhi, India, where I was invited by Brand USA to participate in a celebration for the opening of the U.S.-India Travel and Tourism Partnership Year. The program marks the first year of bilateral engagement on trade in travel and tourism services between the governments of the United States and India under the U.S.-India Strategic and Commercial Dialogue.

The goal is to build new bridges between both countries' governments and private sectors to increase two-way travel and tourism. Brand USA, along with in-market representatives in India and the Department of Commerce's National Travel and Tourism Office, will work together to make the most of the growth potential India offers as a source market for travel to the United States, and NTA will seek those same opportunities for all of North America.

This is important because India is a rising inbound market. Visitation from India into the United States is projected to increase from 1,126,000 in 2015 to 1,940,000 in 2021. That's a 72 percent jump in six years. And total spending by Indian visitors to the United States increased from \$6.7 billion in 2008 to \$11.8 billion in 2015. You can see more data below.

One final note about leadership: We will have another outstanding board of directors that will guide NTA this year. I hope you'll let them hear from you. You can always find their contact information in the front of *Courier* and on NTAonline.com, under the "About NTA" tab. Of course, my info is at the top of this page, and my phone line and inbox are always open.





Source: U.S. National Travel and Tourism Office



COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

### Lin Wang joins NTA staff, focuses on China market

Early last month, NTA welcomed Lin Wang as its new director, China Market Services. In the role, Lin manages NTA's China Inbound Program and serves as the staff liaison for the more than 215 tour companies that are registered in the program.

He also provides guidance and support services to U.S.-based supplier and DMO members to help them as they welcome Chinese groups, who spent more than \$30 billion during visits to the U.S. in 2015.

Lin, a native of Hangzhou, China, brings firsthand knowledge of the China market and extensive expertise in tourism marketing and client relations. Prior to joining NTA, he was an account manager

for Partner Concepts Inc. He holds a master's degree in tourism administration from The George Washington University, and got his bachelor of arts from Fudan University in Shanghai.

"I had heard great things about NTA and its members," says Lin, who is based in Washington, D.C. "I feel really fortunate to join the team and look forward to working with all the members and helping with their success in the China market."

Lin replaced Haybina Hao, who oversaw NTA's China program for nearly seven years. He can be reached at lin.wang@ntastaff.com.





#### The Hill is calling

There's still time to join NTA, the U.S. Travel Association and DMAI in Washington, D.C., for Destination Capitol Hill, March 28-29. The event brings together members of the three organizations from across the United States to educate policymakers about the power of travel as an economic driver.

"I am a part of the D.C. group again this year, and I wouldn't miss it, especially now," said Mark Hoffmann, CTP, owner of Sacramento, California-based Sports Leisure Vacations. "No matter what side of the political spectrum you're on, it's a time to be paying attention, and knowing your congressman or woman isn't a bad idea—it saved my business 35 years ago."

The program combines a day of advocacy training, guest speakers and peer-to-peer networking at the Mayflower Hotel with a legislative day on Capitol Hill, during which attendees encourage federal lawmakers to enact policies aimed at attracting visitors to the U.S. and improving the overall travel experience. Martha Raddatz, ABC News chief global correspondent, will deliver the keynote address to attendees.

To register for the event, visit ustravel.org/events/DCH/ registration.

#### **OMCA** is new strategic partner

NTA has entered into a strategic partnership with the Ontario Motor Coach Association. The alliance between the two organizations will provide avenues of collaboration in advocacy, education and membership.



"NTA's base is the North

American market, and our partnership with OMCA serves to strengthen that commitment," says Pam Inman, NTA president. "We look forward to working with our friends at OMCA to become even more engaged with issues facing our Canadian members and to make new business connections for all our members."

Representatives from each association will attend the other organization's annual convention, and whenever possible, OMCA and NTA will work together to share information and ideas that benefit members of both associations.

OMCA is one of the largest travel and tourism-related associations in Canada, and is the voice of privatesector bus operators, inter-city bus lines, charter and coach tour companies in Ontario. The association includes more than 700 members, ranging from motorcoach and school bus operators to bus product and services providers to tour operators and affiliated seller partners, such as attractions, destinations, hoteliers and retail outlets.

To learn more about OMCA, visit omca.com. To see the complete list of NTA strategic partners, go to ntaonline.com/partners. •

## RELATING TO GOVERNMENT

INSIGHTS ON U.S. LEGISLATIVE ISSUES AND INDUSTRY TOPICS



### **Arriving: Airport investments**

EACH YEAR, airports generate millions of jobs and trillions of dollars for local communities. The Federal Aviation Administration, in its most recent economic impact report, highlighted the economic activity attributed to civil aviation-related goods and services. That activity totaled over \$1.6 trillion, generated 10.6 million jobs with \$447 billion in earnings, and contributed 5.1 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product.

Aside from making a significant economic impact, airports help move more than 716 million passengers annually. There's no doubt that investments in this industry can help spark an economic boom, and dollar for dollar, commercial airports prove to be a remarkably worthwhile investment.

President Donald Trump voiced support for funding transportation projects throughout his campaign. Trump lamented the country's lack of spending on roads, bridges and airports, and he looks to deliver on his proposed \$1 trillion infrastructure package.

The early indications on the administration's plan appear to signal that it will provide tax incentives for infrastructure through public-private partnerships and private investments. Most observers are hopeful that his focus on airports is reflected among the mix of projects.

While no plans have debuted from Trump and the Republican-led Congress yet, most believe that the infrastructure issue will be addressed this year. Both parties appear to recognize the need for investing in airports, and how the negotiations unfold will be critical to airports and municipalities across the country.

On the other hand, Senate Democrats have introduced their own proposal, urging President Trump to work with them to improve the nation's infrastructure. Democrats plan to use infrastructure as an area of agreement with Trump, and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., has said that Democrats are setting down a "marker" with the package as both sides gear up to figure out the details. The Democratic plan specifically calls for airport investments and focuses more on hard dollars rather than tax credits.

In Congress the focus is not only on the proposed infrastructure package, but on the FAA's 2017 reauthorization as well. Last July, leaders of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee reached a bipartisan agreement to extend the FAA's authorization through Sept. 30, 2017.



Because FAA funding and programs need to be reauthorized this year, Congress has a crucial opportunity to bolster the U.S. economy by modernizing aviation infrastructure and providing long-term funding stability. Improvements in security and airport infrastructure are clearly going to be a focus of the upcoming negotiations over the FAA's future. With the two pieces of legislation building up to be top priorities, airports should and must be a large part of the overall infrastructure decision.

Another important piece to this puzzle is Secretary of Transportation Elaine

With infrastructure investments and FAA reauthorization building up to be top priorities, airports should and must be a large part of the overall infrastructure decision.

Chao, who was confirmed Jan. 31. Chao's nomination sailed through committee consideration and passed the Senate 93-6. Senate Commerce Committee Chairman John Thune, R-S.D., called Chao "well qualified" and said she would bring strong leadership to the Transportation Department, an agency that will have a large seat at the table in this year's FAA reauthorization and infrastructure debates. Chao has stated full support for Trump's call for investment, innovation and modernization of our nation's infrastructure. She, like the president, believes that this investment is vital to moving the economy forward and ensuring that all Americans are safe as they travel through the U.S.

Airports must have new runways, terminals and increased funding for security, and aging facilities must be upgraded. Democrats, including House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., have expressed a willingness to work with the president and Republicans to develop this bipartisan infrastructure package. But only time will tell which projects will be included. For avid travelers and local economies, we hope that the long list of projects includes the nation's airports. �

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

## CBP launches Electronic Visa Update System

BY JASON McCAMMACK,



THE ELECTRONIC VISA
Update System, or EVUS,
is U.S. Customs and Border
Protection's online system
used by Chinese nationals who hold a 10-year
B-category visa to update
basic biographical information to facilitate their travel
to the United States. B-category visas

to the United States. B-category visas are visas for general business and tourist travel to the United States, and an EVUS enrollment is required in addition to a visa.

"All individuals carrying maximum validity (10-year) B1/B2, B1 and B2 visas in passports issued by the People's Republic of China must have a valid EVUS enrollment in order to travel to the United States," says Suzanne Shepherd, director, CBP Travel and Tourism Initiatives. "Travelers who are subject to EVUS requirements but who do not have valid enrollments will not be able to obtain a boarding pass or enter through a land port of entry."

CBP does not collect a fee for an EVUS enrollment. The agency anticipates that an EVUS enrollment fee will eventually be implemented, but there is currently no time frame for when a fee will be imposed. Until then, travelers



can complete their EVUS enrollment without charge.

Each EVUS enrollment requires the traveler to provide his or her name, birth date, an emergency contact, passport information, biographical data and employment information. Travelers

Chinese travelers
can submit an EVUS
enrollment at any
time and will typically
receive a response
from the system within
minutes. However, some
responses may take up
to 72 hours.



must also answer questions related to travel eligibility.

Chinese travelers can submit an EVUS enrollment at any time, including at the airport. They will typically receive a response from the system within minutes after submitting their information. However, some responses may take up to 72 hours, which could cause delays if travelers forget to enroll before arriving at the airport or a port of entry.

Enrollment for all applicants will remain valid for two years or until the traveler's visa or passport expires, whichever comes first. The visa holders will then have to update their information before traveling to the United States again.

If you are interested in visiting the United States and need to submit an EVUS application, a friend, relative, travel industry professional or another third party may submit the required information to EVUS on your behalf.

If you have questions about how to fill out the application or if you have issues with the EVUS site, you can contact the EVUS Call Center at +1.202.325.0180. The call center is available 24 hours a day, seven days per week, but it is closed on U.S. federal holidays. The center is staffed with Mandarin speakers.

You may also contact the call center by email at evus@cbp.dhs.gov. It is important to note that although the call center staff is available to answer questions travelers might have regarding EVUS, all EVUS enrollments must be submitted online by the traveler or a third party.

Additional information is available on CBP's EVUS website: cbp.gov/evus. Please monitor this website for the most current information.

Jason McCammack is a writer in the Office of Public Affairs with U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

#### Correction

An article in the February *Courier* about the Business Visa Center contained a typo in the email address provided for inquiries. The correct address is **businessvisa@state.gov**.

#### 3 Qs

#### 1. How can I find out what visa type I have?

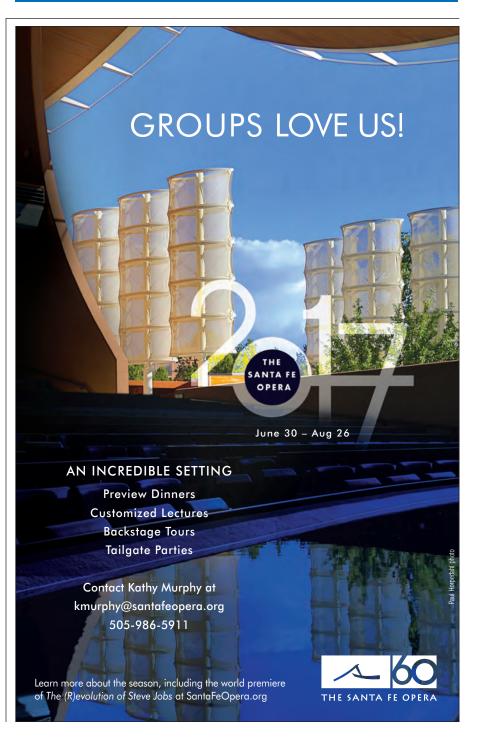
Your visa category appears in the upper right-hand portion of your visa.

#### 2. What if I cannot answer the EVUS questions in English?

You can seek assistance from a trusted friend, family member or travel agent to complete the form in English.

#### 3. Does this affect Chinese nationals living in Canada?

Yes. Anyone traveling on a People's Republic of China passport with a 10-year B1/B2, B1 or B2 visa will be required to enroll in EVUS. �



## A friend in the biz

BY THOM SINGER



Everyone hopes they will connect with others, but instead of looking only for those who can help you, seek out people who you can help.

ONE OF THE BEST THINGS you can do to uncover greater opportunities in your career is to build long-term and mutually beneficial relationships. Through real friendships with people in the travel industry, you will discover more ideas and be able to navigate the challenging parts of any business journey.

People who seek to improve their professional performance might look around and see that those with extensive networks of business contacts often are the ones who get the best jobs, clients or other wins. They might decide, "It's time to network."

But networking is more than passing out business cards and sending LinkedIn requests; there is no fast track to cultivating relationships. To develop contacts that will help you succeed, you must be committed to the ongoing give-and-take of friendship, which involves understanding what others need and to finding ways to help.

To start building a network, accept that it takes time, money and in-person effort to get to know people. Think about dating. You don't expect to really know someone after a first date. It takes many dates—and, for most people, many months—before you know a person well enough to get married. The same is true in networking. You need many shared experiences before someone becomes a true business friend.

You have to be committed to regularly participating in networking events, attending industry conferences, planning individual follow-up meetings and discovering ways to be a resource to those people who come into your

world. If you believe that meeting a few key people once or twice is networking, then you are destined to think networking does not work.

I meet disenchanted people all the time. They run around professing that networking and participating in groups like NTA are a waste of time. They roll their eyes at those who champion the importance of being involved, and at industry events they sit with co-workers and old friends.

Convinced that others are selfish and nobody will ever refer leads to them, they never begin a conversation with a stranger or invite others into their clique. Even when they do meet people through business connections, they wait around for the phone to ring. And when it doesn't, they dismiss the whole networking concept.

Networking is not a verb, though. It's a lifestyle. Networking means looking for ways to cultivate real friendships by discovering people in the business world with whom you can develop mutual respect. A great way to do this is to change your approach at a networking event. Everyone hopes they will connect with others, but instead of looking only for those who can help you, seek out people who you can help.

Try introducing groups of peers to each other and see the joy that creates. In the short term, let that be your prize, because by thriving in the successes of your friends, you will have deeper friendships. It changes everything, and others will notice you more for your friendly servant's attitude.

Friends help friends, so treat the people you meet in the travel industry as if they could become the most important people in your life. Peers, competitors, vendors, sponsors, etc.—they all have the power to have a major impact on your future.

By being the person in the industry who seeks first to help others, you'll become "a friend in the biz." •



Thom Singer is a professional speaker, master of ceremonies and the author of 12 books on the power of business relationships, networking, presentation skills, sales and legal marketing. For more information, go to thomsinger.com.



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## The Interview INDUSTRY INSIGHTS FROM NTA MEMBERS

## For sustainable tours, make local connections

BY GABE WEBB

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has recognized more than 1,000 places across the globe as World Heritage sites. That designation brings attention to these historically and culturally significant attractions, but increased visitation has its drawbacks. In November 2016, dangerous levels of smog were reported at the Taj Mahal. Iceland's Jokulsarlon, a glacial lagoon near UNESCO-candidate Vatnajokull National Park, is at the center of a legal dispute between the government and private developers.

Courier reached out to Richard Church, founder of Battered Suitcase. His company, which joined NTA last year, incorporates UNESCO World Heritage sites in all of its FIT tours. Read on for his thoughts about packaging these places and for keeping his tours sustainable and responsible.



Richard Church

How did you get started packaging

Church: Originally, the company, under a different name, arranged travel for film and TV documentary crews all over the world. We'd sent people to

Guatemala, parts of Africa, war zones in Europe. It was very much a common theme of travel with history backgrounds, and we sat down one day and we thought, "All these trips we're arranging ... we can turn these into a business."

We started selling a half-dozen tours that we'd done for some film and TV crews, and that was two and a half years ago. We now go to 32 countries throughout the world, and we've got 36 tours that we organize.

I was involved quite heavily with the research side of television and worked on a number of programs, so [travel] was a natural extension of that.

Tell me a little about one of your tours. Church: One that we launched in November 2016 was to the Sultanate of Oman. As far as tourism is concerned, it has been a very upmarket resort destination, with very few people going there. However, it's got some wonderful historical sites: from the "beehive" tombs to palaces and mosques.

We've put together a really fascinating seven-day tour. It's everything from beaches to sinkholes to 3,000-meter mountains. It's a really stunning country. It has four UNESCO sites, and we go to three of them.

Why did you decide to build tours around UNESCO World Heritage sites? Church: I did some work for UNESCO

about 10 years ago. We were looking at the work UNESCO did: how it was funded, how they designated the UNESCO World Heritage sites. And I've always had this very keen interest in how—once a site is accredited as a World Heritage site—that site and region changes. Is it always for the better? Or is often for the detriment of the site?

There are 1,052 designated sites throughout the world. It's also the most well-known [historical] designation in the world. It was an ideal thing for us to attach ourselves to, and if you take a

country as a whole and start to look at the UNESCO sites, it gives you some sort of idea of the heritage of the country and where the culture comes from. [The sites] give you a good indication of where to start if you want to get into the country.

Now, all of our tours include UNESCO World Heritage sites, however, apart from that, they all include a large number of additional archaeological or historical sites as well.

Bear in mind that UNESCO doesn't necessarily have to mean an old building. There's the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list as well. In Korea, you have kimchi—it's a pickled vegetable—and the whole process of making it has gotten UNESCO status. Each family has their own unique recipe. Each region has its own recipe, too, and you can go into restaurants and try 20 different kinds of these pickled vegetables if your stomach can stand it. It doesn't just end with looking at rocks and ruins and tombs. It's a lot more widespread than that.

#### How do you go about selecting the sites you travel to?

Church: We have selected the countries by our ability to create a tour that would be fairly unique. We might be able to get unique access, or we have knowledge of people who work for UNESCO on the ground, which helps us greatly with our guides.



The actual design can take quite a long time, as long as a year or 18 months. We've got two or three tours lined up to launch in 2017 that we haven't quite gotten the details correct yet, and we won't launch them until we're satisfied that everything is in place.

What are some of the challenges you've faced when planning these tours, given that many are in locations where tourism infrastructure might be less developed?

Church: Logistics are always a big issue. In a country like the U.K., it's quite easy to transport clients from Bath back to London or to go to Bristol or to Stratford-upon-Avon. It involves very short distances and is easy to arrange the road transport. Places like China, and even in some cases the United States, can be incredibly hard to get clients around.

Germany is another example. It has 40 UNESCO sites, and they're dotted all about the country. You have to make a judgment as to what you include in the tour. All of our tours are tailor made, so we have a conversation with our clients during the booking process to determine whether there are particular elements that they really want to see.

We often hear that travelers want authentic, local experiences. What does crafting them look like for your company?

Church: We tend to avoid the main flow of a tourist attraction and find other ways to view it.

We've been blessed with having a number of colleagues within these areas who know the places. Their families have been there for generations, and they know the back roads. They know which gates to approach the Taj Mahal, which route to use to get to Machu Picchu. They know Stonehenge is great, but you'll queue for two hours to get in. However, we know where there are old neolithic tombs that you can actually go in within a half-hour walk. It's using the knowledge of our local partners.

That's what we pride ourselves on: the fact that we do keep this—and it's a very over-used word—sustainable. We heavily rely on the local providers. Our local partners work with us to provide us with this unique access and knowledge. That's one of the key things.



You mentioned sustainability. As UNESCO raises the profile of these heritage sites, how do you balance that with their fragility?

Church: That is such a difficult question. In Agra, they've had smog for the last 20 years, which has been introduced by heavy traffic. So now, for a mile and a half around the Taj Mahal, you can only get there by electric vehicles. Is that a deterrent? Yes, but it's also good for the locals. They're no longer breathing these fumes. However, measures like that take years to clean the air.

For us, the sustainability key is to use as much local enterprise as we can. We use family-run boutique hotels, which keeps money in the area's economy and provides jobs for locals. We use local restaurants, and we actively encourage our guests to partake in local food, to keep it all in the economy. All of our guides are locally sourced, [as are] our drivers and transportation.

The only thing where the money goes out of the country is with the airlines and our booking fees. Apart from that, I can confidently say, where possible, the large majority of the cost the clients are paying stays within that community they're visiting.

You've cultivated relationships over time, so how does a tour operator company take the first steps in building those for more sustainable travel?

Church: The relationships we've built

are based on visiting. Every tour we sell, we've done an inspection. Prior to that, there will be research and possibly a research trip. During that time, it's immersing yourself with the people you've met and getting them to introduce you to the people who are going to be able to provide your clients with superb service.

We have gone through different people that we wouldn't use again because we've had bad experiences, and we certainly wouldn't put our clients there. However, it's all part of a learning process.

That's an advantage [over] booking the various elements of a tour via the internet. We have been there and had the tears and lost money and gotten beyond that stage. We've built the relationships, so the client knows exactly what it is they'll get for their money.

It is about getting yourself there. Anyone can book a hotel, flight and tours. But [booking individually] you have a certain element of risk that all is going to perform satisfactorily. What do you do when something goes wrong? You're the person who has to put it right. You're not able to turn to us and say "The train didn't run that day," or "That boat left a day early, what am I going to do?" •

This interview has been edited for length and clarity. For more information about Battered Suitcase and its tours, visit battered-suitcase.com.

## 5 questions with Donald Leadbetter



THE U.S. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE announced Donald Leadbetter as its new national tourism program manager in August 2016. Leadbetter has spent more than 16 years working in the tourism and hospitality sectors, including five years with the organization's Commercial

Services and Centennial programs. Based in Washington, D.C., he serves as the point of contact for the tourism industry, which is one of the reasons he was chosen to speak at the NTA Government Relations Breakfast Bistro at Travel Exchange in St. Louis.

#### What are you most excited about in your new role?

Leadbetter: Big picture-wise, it's working with the travel industry to connect people to national parks, especially younger and diverse travelers. I'm passionate about sustainable travel and will be doing everything I can to advocate for sustainable tourism solutions. I'll also be looking for ways to support accessible travel to parks, which need to be prepared to welcome all travelers, including those with disabilities. I'm also excited about working with Native American communities, which have deep cultural ties to many parks, to support tribal tourism. Finally, I really enjoy working with the international travel trade to promote parks and prepare their customers for a great experience.

Do you feel the NPS Centennial campaign was successful? Leadbetter: Absolutely. You couldn't escape the Find Your Park campaign last year; it was everywhere! We had a great centennial with record visitation, a huge amount of media coverage, special events and programs, a massive digital and social following, and some very successful fundraising for parks. There have been challenges, too, notably crowding in some of the more popular parks, but that's a good problem to have.

What do you hope the passing of the NPS Centennial Act will do for the parks?

Leadbetter: Support for the parks has traditionally been a nonpartisan issue, so it was heartening that both sides of the aisle came together to pass the Centennial Act. It includes several mechanisms to direct funds toward critical infrastructure and maintenance projects. Park budgets have been shrinking for some time, so this additional support will be very helpful.

What's one of your personal favorite national park experiences? Leadbetter: I've spent a lot of time in Alaska's Glacier Bay National Park on expedition ships, watching glaciers calve and seals swim by. There is stillness in the cold air that's mesmerizing, especially early in the morning. It's a special place. Also, I proposed to my wife on an uninhabited island in a national marine park in Mexico, so that's a special memory as well.

"I believe that every park visitor leaves feeling inspired by their experience and with a greater appreciation for nature, history and the interconnectedness of our world."

-Donald Leadbetter, U.S. National Park Service

How can the tourism industry help you and the parks? Leadbetter: First, be creative when developing itineraries and packages that include parks. Half of our park visitation goes to just 30 of the 417 parks in the system. There are a lot of amazing places to visit in this country, so help us tackle the crowding challenges we're seeing by promoting the "hidden gems" of the National Park Service.

Second, prepare your customers for their park visit. The wildlife in our parks is 100 percent wild! There has been a rise in human-wildlife encounters in recent years, and that puts both people and wildlife at risk.

Finally, I believe that every park visitor leaves feeling inspired by their experience and with a greater appreciation for nature, history and the interconnectedness of our world. Leverage that moment! Encourage your clients to take action, whether that's donating to a conservation cause, joining a park friends group or signing up for a voluntourism trip. That's how we turn travel into a transformational experience.



#### Travel Exchange '17: So nice, let's do it twice

Fresh off Travel Exchange in St. Louis, we immediately turn our attention deep in the heart of Texas, as San Antonio plays host to NTA's second show in 2017. Members requested their annual convention be returned to fourth-quarter dates, and this is the year we double up. If you couldn't be with us in the Gateway to West, join us in the Alamo City Dec. 14–18! And if you attended in St. Louis, you'll save 50 percent on San Antonio reg fees until July 14. Visit NTAonline.com/convention/san-antonio to register, and email Laura Scott at sponsor@ntastaff.com to learn more about sponsorship opportunities. �

CC FLICKR/DCWRITERDAWN: bit.ly/2lniYQr

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON AND KENDALL FLETCHER





## An accomplished amalgam of African-American airmen

Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site pays tribute to the U.S. Army's first African-American pilots, a group that played a significant role in America's World War II effort. During a visit to the Alabama site, groups can learn more about the legendary black aviators, as well as the navigators, mechanics, field instructors, nurses and other personnel who were trained at Tuskegee Army Air Field or educated at Tuskegee University.

At Hangar #1 Museum, visitors can see two period training aircraft used by the combat pilots and learn more about daily life for those working at Moton Field in the 1940s. Hangar #2 Museum, which opened three years ago, is home to the site's signature attraction: a full-sized replica Red-tail P-51 Mustang. An outdoor walking path leads to 20 wayside exhibits that provide additional insights.

Other local attractions—including the Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site, the Tuskegee Heritage Museum and the Tuskegee Human & Civil Rights Multicultural Center—can round out an African-American heritage tour of the area.

Fore more information, call **+1.334.724.0922** or go to **nps.gov/tuai** — P.H.

#### **Exhibit lineup honors a half-century of country music**



COAST DAILY

There's a year-long celebration taking place at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum to commemorate the attraction's 50 years of work in preserving and interpreting the history and evolution of country music.

Opening this month is an exhibit highlighting successful artists from 2016, including headliners Miranda Lambert, Chris and Morgane Stapleton, Kelsea Ballerini and Brett Eldredge.

Country music legend Loretta Lynn is featured in

one of the biggest upcoming exhibitions, which is set to open Aug. 25 and run through June 28, 2018. Visitors will explore the life of the "Coal Miner's Daughter" through her rags-to-riches story, music and personal items.

An exhibit featuring Faith Hill and Tim McGraw will be unveiled Nov. 17 and run through May 2018. Showcasing

personal and professional memorabilia, it will explore their career together as a married couple and their time as independent, award-winning country artists.

Other exhibits in the queue this year at the museum will feature Jason Aldean (opening May 26) and Shania Twain (opening June 26).

For more information, visit countrymusichalloffame.org or call +1.615.499.8264. —K.F.



#### WHAT'S ON





#### Thinking about a century of Rodin

In 2017 several major art museums across the globe are commemorating the 100th anniversary of Auguste Rodin's death with temporary displays, educational activities and public programs. The following NTA-member museums will host temporary exhibits featuring the work of the groundbreaking French sculptor:

**Legion of Honor, San Francisco** "Auguste Rodin: The Centenary Installation," now through the Dec. 31, 2017. **legionofhonor.famsf.org** 

The Rodin Museum, Philadelphia "The Kiss," now through January 2019. rodinmuseum.org

**Telfair Museums, Savannah, Georgia** "Rodin: The Human Experience—Selections from the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Collections," Sept. 1-Jan. 7, 2018. **telfair.org** 

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City "Rodin at The Met," Sept. 5-Jan. 15, 2018. metmuseum.org

The Met, the Rodin Museum and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles (getty.edu/museum), also will feature special installations based around Rodin works in their permanent collections.

To learn more about the Rodin Centenary celebration, visit rodin100.org. —P.H.

#### **Dancing in the streets**

Each summer, the small, quiet community of Rexburg, Idaho, transforms into a city bursting with lively music, dancing and colorful costumes from all over the world during Idaho International Summerfest.

Despite participants' language, cultural and religious differences, the festival brings the southeastern Idaho community together for a week-long celebration of diversity. The festival has highlighted more than 70 countries, and this year will feature Mexico, China and Kyrgyzstan, to name a few.

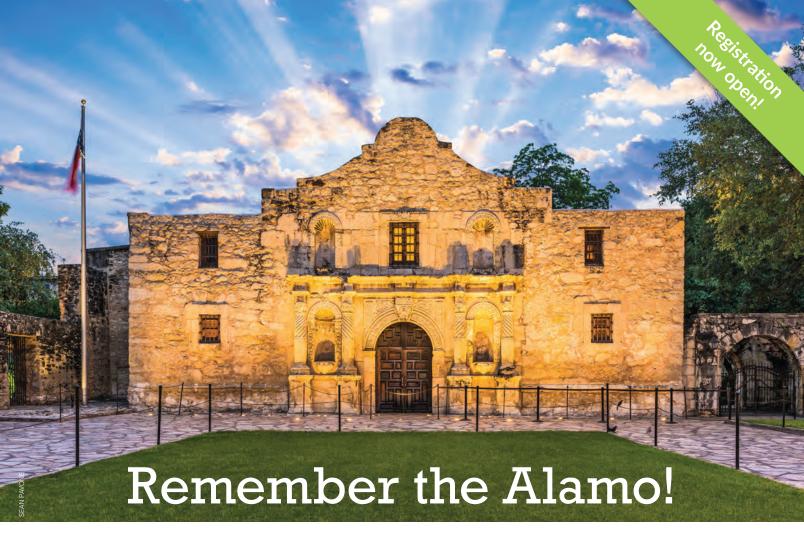
Summerfest will showcase all types of entertainers, many performing traditional songs and dances from a variety of cultures. More than 300 artists participate in signature events such as the Gala Performances, the city-wide Humanitarian Project, the Youth Culture Outreach and, most famously, the Street Festival. There will also be a surprise celebrity performer at this year's event.

The 32nd annual celebration, formerly known as the Idaho International Dance and Music Festival, is set for July 9-14.

Visit idahosummerfest.com or call +1.208.356.5700 to find out more. —K.F. �



UMMERFEST.COM



### And remember Travel Exchange '17 in San Antonio.

The NTA convention returns to fourth-quarter dates in 2017. Join us deep in the heart of Texas this December for Travel Exchange '17 in San Antonio. And if you were with us in St. Louis, you're eligible for 50% off registration fees when you sign up by July 14.

"You simply cannot develop a relationship over the phone that's as effective as face-to-face communication. The money paid to attend Travel Exchange is worth every penny to our operation."

-David Miller, Flying Saddle Resort; Alpine, Wyoming; NTA member since 2009



Visit NTA Online to register, view the schedule and sponsor.

NTAonline.com/convention/san-antonio

## Colorful characters and colorful blooms

Historical homes and gardens represent unique aspects of North American culture

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

AS TRAVELERS EXPLORE North America, they can blend history and horticulture lessons during visits to famous estates and garden-based attractions. Tours can feature the mansions of U.S. presidents and American entrepreneurs, the homes of entertainers such as Elvis and Loretta Lynn, and gardens that blend some of the best examples of classic landscaping and colorful blooms with unique hands-on programs and themed special events. The following pages highlight just some of the NTA-member properties where travelers can explore history, architecture and natural beauty.



#### In the footsteps of the first president

Located just 20 miles from the heart of Washington, D.C., George Washington's Mount Vernon is a regular stop for school groups.

"Students are able to take what they have learned in the classroom and experience history coming to life at Mount Vernon," says Melissa Wood, the Virginia attraction's director of media relations. "They can walk in the footsteps of George Washington and can learn about the trials and triumphs that went into the establishment of this nation."

She says there are a number of interactive programs and options for school groups at Mount Vernon, including After Hours: Student Evenings at Mount Vernon. School groups arrive in the afternoon to tour the grounds then enjoy a private dinner in the food court. They also have exclusive access to the exhibits in the Education Center.

Another popular option is the Through My Eyes Character Tour. As part of these 45-minute programs, which are offered on weekdays, re-enactors provide a look at daily life at the estate by portraying someone who worked at the mansion during Washington's time.

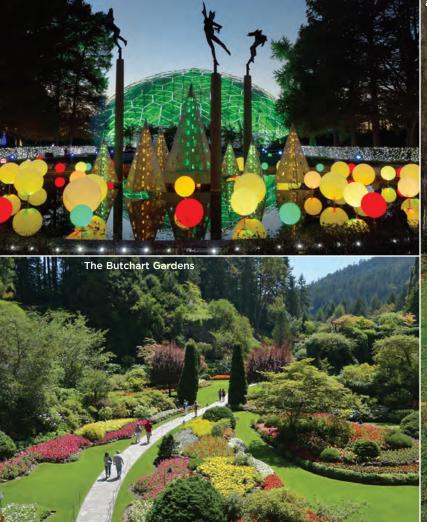
"From interacting with Mount Vernon's historical costumed characters to learning about Washington's thoughts for a new country, students can have a once-in-a-lifetime experience during their visit to Mount Vernon," adds Wood.

Missouri Botanical Garden



For band and choir groups, the attraction also offers performance opportunities, which can be combined with behind-the-scenes tours.

For more information, contact Wood at mwood@ mountvernon.org or go to mountvernon.org.





#### An illuminating look at two gardens

Two longtime NTA members, the Missouri Botanical Gardens and the Butchart Gardens, continue to beckon visitors with acres of colorful blooms, waterfalls, ponds, sculpture and more. The attractions, which are based in St. Louis and Victoria, British Columbia, respectively, also offer unique exhibits and special events, including the following:



#### Missouri Botanical Gardens

"Garden of Glass: The Art of Craig Mitchell Smith"

The exhibit will feature 30 of the artist's flower-themed works, all commissioned specifically for the Missouri Botanical Garden. *May 13-Aug. 13* 

#### Garden Glow

Large-scale light installments transform the gardens into a sea of color, which guests can see as part of this popular annual event. Nov. 18–Jan. 1, 2018

Contact Gene Peimann at tourism@ mobot.org or go to missouribotanical garden.org.



#### The Butchart Gardens

#### **Spectacular Summer Evenings**

After a day of touring the gardens, visitors can gather at the Concert Lawn Stage to hear live music from featured artists. A fireworks show follows on Saturdays. *Nightly July 1-Sept. 2* 

#### Night Illumination

Summer evenings also include thousands of lights bringing a new world of colors, shapes and shadows to the Butchart Gardens. *Nightly June 15-Sept. 15* 

Contact Josh Bickerton at joshbickerton@butchartgardens.com or go to butchartgardens.com.





#### Check out Cheekwood

There is a lot going on these days at Cheekwood Botanical Garden and Museum of Art. The attraction, which is set on 55 acres in Nashville, Tennessee, is home to a 30,000-squarefoot Georgian mansion, 11 themed gardens, an art museum and the Carell Woodland Sculpture Trail.

The circa 1932 home is the focus of a major restoration project during the first half of 2017. "Our head curator and her team are re-creating some of the rooms, including some never before seen by the public," says Laura Elkins, Cheekwood's director of tourism and business development. "She has been scouring auction houses, contacting family members, commissioning exact replicas of curtains and rugs, and getting period paint samples."

When the mansion reopens June 17, groups can tour the updated rooms and also check out the "Dressing Downton: Changing Fashion for Changing Times" special exhibit. "Dressing Downton" includes 36 costumes from the wildly popular TV show and will be on display from June 17 to Sept. 10.

To add to the period feel, the attraction's staff has added plants that were available in the 1930s to many of the gardens. Classic cars from that era also will be parked in the original garages on weekends in July.

To learn more, contact Elkins at lelkins@cheekwood.org or go to cheekwood.org.

#### A plantation destination

Groups headed to New Orleans can explore a different side of local culture by visiting Houmas House Plantation and Gardens. The attraction's Jesse Lambert says groups will find a lot to like when they stop by the estate, which is located 60 miles west of New Orleans in Darrow.



"Visiting Houmas House allows guests to see how the wealthy sugar barons lived and ran a sugar plantation business," he says. "It gives them a glimpse into the day-to-day lives of the lady of the house, the culture of plantation life and the importance of the Mississippi River."

As part of mansion tours, guides tell entertaining stories of past owners and how the plantation grew from a modest hut into a grand estate. Visitors can touch and photograph many of the period artifacts they see during the program. Lambert says strolling through the lush gardens also is a must.

Overnight accommodations are available in the 21 cottage-style rooms of the Inn at Houmas House. Guests also can enjoy regional cuisine at the three onproperty restaurants and sample fine wine from the property's wine cellar.

Contact Lambert at jesse@houmashouse.com or go to houmashouse.com to find out more.

The NTA membership includes three additional historical plantations in the state: Longue Vue House & Gardens in New Orleans (longuevue.com), Nottoway Plantation in White Castle (nottoway.com) and Oak Alley Plantation in Vacherie (oakalleyplantation.com).

#### Feeling Florally Festive?

Check out these three popular annual events, which showcase fine flora:

#### Philadelphia Flower Show

Philadelphia

March 11-19, 2017; March 3-11, 2018 NTA contact: Michelle Ullman mullman@pennhort.org theflowershow.com

#### **Tulip Time Festival**

Holland, Michigan May 6-14, 2017; May 5-13, 2018 Hannah Rogers hannah@tuliptime.com tuliptime.com

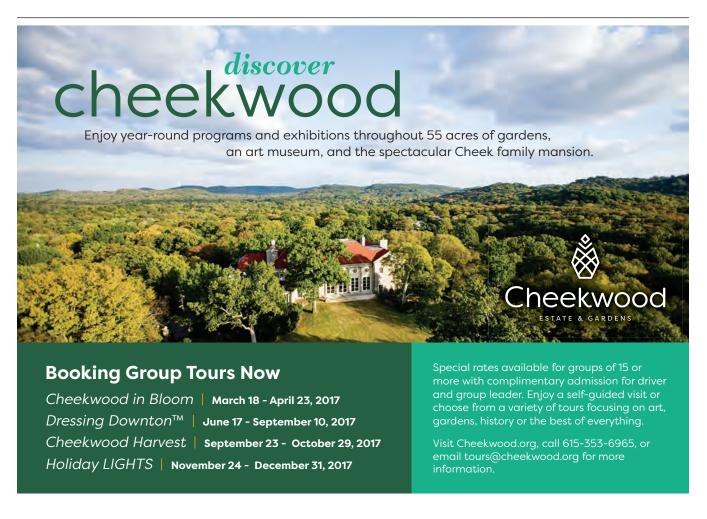
#### Portland Rose Festival

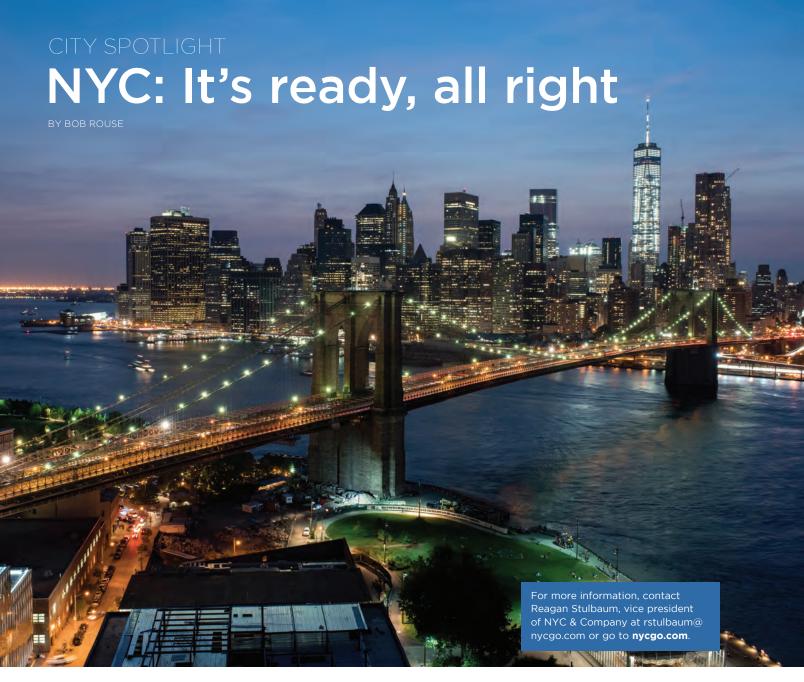
Portland, Oregon

May 26-June 11, 2017 (Grand Parade is June 10); May 25-June 10, 2018 (Grand Parade is June 9) Carol Ross

carolr@rosefestival.org rosefestival.org







This article is a blend of in-person coverage (indicated by shaded boxes) and information gathered from NTA members.

I HAD BEEN ON THE JOB with *Courier* for only a couple of months last year when I learned that New York City was the site of a Tourism Cares event some nine months away. I immediately booked a flight. A trip to the city allowed me to volunteer alongside industry colleagues, plus it opened the door to some hands-on research for this article.

I was ready for New York, and the city, it turned out, was ready for me.

Reagan Stulbaum, vice president of NYC & Company, had told me at Travel Exchange about a program her organization had launched, and she wanted me to try it out.

"We established Tourism Ready to help local suppliers better understand how to work with the travel trade," Reagan said. "We know that planning an authentic experience relies on working with smaller organizations that don't always understand how to work with tour operators or handle group business."

The DMO established working groups in all five boroughs to teach business owners how to accommodate tour operator needs, first by creating a trade-specific business profile, then packaging their tour product with others in the borough and cross-promoting it to the trade.

NYC & Company is expanding the second-year program by incorporating more Manhattan-based businesses and offering two tracks: a repeat of the beginner's program and a series of seminars for those wishing to expand their interaction with travel professionals.

"As visitors seek out new, authentic ways to experience New York City, we're helping local companies become more tourism ready," Reagan said. "This helps tour operators increase the breadth and depth of the product they offer." CELEBRATE NEW YEAR'S EVE IN TIMES SQUARE EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR - BELIEVE IT OR NOT!



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#### In town for the weekend

My wife, Mary Beth, joined me in New York post-Tourism Cares, and we visited a site we had both long wanted—and needed—to see: the National September 11 Memorial & Museum.

At the suggestion of a colleague, we went to the memorial twice, at night and in the bright sunlight. Day or night, the experience is humbling, emotional and profound.

The twin pools are surrounded by parapets that bear the names of the dead, but they are surrounded also by the living—those of us who came to pay tribute and, further away, those who pursue life in cars and cabs and planes.

The museum offers more of everything 9/11: insight, emotion, death and courage. We saw many groups there that day, composed of different ages and nationalities. You might walk in with a group, but exploring the museum is an intensely personal experience. The multimedia exhibitions are interactive and informative; the memorabilia and detailed documentation present humanity during its most miserable hours. And its finest.

I was immeasurably moved, yet ready to move on.









#### Two tours for the taking

Reagan had introduced me to Big Onion Walking Tours, a 26-year-old company that offers walkabouts led by educated experts who help groups explore the fabric of New York City. Tours cover a variety of neighborhoods, ethnic heritage, local products and history.

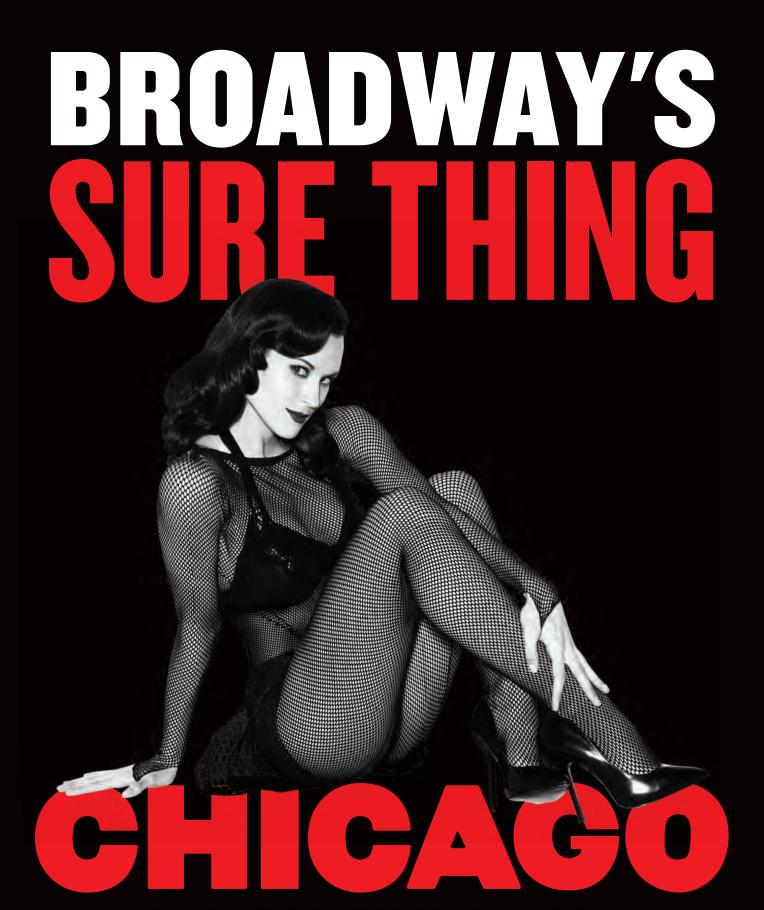
Perhaps because I had tickets for "Hamilton" on Saturday, I chose for my Sunday stroll a tour that focuses on the historical highlights of Lower Manhattan. Our walk, led by James, a Columbia University grad student, twisted through the same streets that George Washington once walked, and ended at the grave of Alexander Hamilton himself.

Reagan didn't have to do much arm-twisting to interest me in A Slice of Brooklyn Pizza Tour. You could say I came for the pizza but stayed for the show. I was expecting a marinara-fueled pizza/pub crawl, but I got a half-day motorcoach tour that was highly entertaining and remarkably informative.

The other tour participants included two families, three Australians and a bridge club, and we were led by Marc, a Brooklynite with the knowledge of a native and the patter of a comedian. I did eat pizza, both Neapolitan- and Sicilian-style, but I also learned about the history and heart of Brooklyn.

The (non-marinara) highlights of the tour were visiting scenes from Brooklyn-shot films ("Saturday Night Fever," "The French Connection" and others) and exploring Coney Island. While it was interesting to learn about the park's funky rides and stand on its famous boardwalk, it was even more interesting to view it through Marc's eyes. And the people we encountered—fungettaboudit! Paid actors couldn't have played the roles better.

When Mary Beth left the city, I left the hotel that served as Tourism Cares headquarters and moved to the Hotel Belvedere in Midtown. This NTA-member property put me in the perfect location to go to another Broadway show. I escorted myself to "Beautiful" and was pleased that the full show was as enjoyable as the selections presented last January at Travel Exchange during the NYC Center Stage Luncheon.



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#### Be the borough

Iconic attractions and areas—the Statue of Liberty and Times Square, for example—are ingrained in the minds and, often, the itineraries of New York City visitors. But the city offers highlights and hidden gems throughout all five boroughs: the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island, according to Reagan Stulbaum of NYC & Company.

"Each borough is home to a multitude of neighborhoods, and each of those has its own flair, from artsy to ethnic, from downtown chic to quaint seaside sanctuaries," she says. "That means there are near endless opportunities to explore all the nooks and crannies NYC has to offer."

Every first-timer should see the city's landmarks, and Stulbaum points out that for returning visitors, the

tried-and-true should be "try what's new."

"Times Square always offers something new, and opening soon is Gulliver's Gate, the city's first miniature world," Stulbaum says. "And National Geographic ENCOUNTER: Ocean Odyssey is an all-sensory virtual journey through the depths of the ocean; it will open in the fall."

A group's perfect visit to New York City, then, can incorporate a mix of the iconic sites with some of the city's neighborhoods and attractions recommended by the locals of each borough.

You got glimpses of Manhattan and Brooklyn on the previous page, so here's something Stulbaum suggests for the other three boroughs:

#### The Bronx

The New York Botanical Garden features 50 gardens and collections, world-renowned exhibitions, rich educational programming and family-friendly activities. "It is truly a living museum," Stulbaum says, "an urban oasis unlike any other."

The attraction offers year-round guided and self-guided tours of its special exhibitions and collections, as well as private tram and behind-the-scenes tours.

Meal packages, public performance space and motorcoach parking are also available. For more information on this NTA member, contact Ben Lipnick at blipnick@nybg.org or go to nybg.org.

#### Queens

The Museum of the Moving Image is the country's only attraction dedicated to film, television and digital media, with more than 1,400 artifacts on view, including costumes, movie memorabilia, playable classic video arcade games and a Yoda puppet from "The Empire Strikes Back."

The Behind the Screen guided tour explores highlights of the museum's core exhibition, and it offers visitors the opportunity to make animated videos, create their own flipbook and dub their voices over famous movie scenes. movingimage.us





#### Staten Island

Serving first as a home for retired sailors when built in the 1800s, Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden is said to be the largest ongoing adaptive reuse project in the United States. The 23 historical buildings, nine botanical gardens and 10 acres of wetlands—set on an 83-acre campus—are the elements of a regional arts center where history, architecture, visual art, theater, dance, music and environmental science provide dynamic experiences for all ages.

The venue, a Smithsonian affiliate, is home to the Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art, the Noble Maritime Collection, the Staten Island Children's Museum, Art Lab (an arts school) and the Staten Island Museum.

The attraction is easily accessible by the free Staten Island Ferry and local bus; parking is available for motorcoaches. snug-harbor.org

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#### Sights, sounds and tastes of Harlem

NTA-member Harlem One Stop is a community-based nonprofit organization serving as a centralized source for tours, entertainment, events, information and history related to upper Manhattan, including all of Harlem, Washington Heights and Inwood.

A variety of walking tours, as well as support services, are offered to tour planners. Customized itineraries draw on the diversity of cultural and culinary offerings that are unique to each neighborhood. Tours last two hours, but group itineraries can expand to half- or full-day group programs.

"The most popular tours focus on the themes of gospel, history, architecture and jazz, and a meal can be added to any tour," says Yuien Chin, executive director of Harlem One Stop. "For student groups, we can also arrange interactive workshops or a special-interest experience."

The northern Manhattan neighborhoods of Harlem are

easily accessible by public transportation or motorcoach. Travel time is seven to 15 minutes by subway from Top of the Rock, Rockefeller Center or Columbus Circle. And it's a five-to 15-minute ride by motorcoach from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Hayden Planetarium or South Central Park.

Sites on scheduled walking tours include the following:

- Alexander Hamilton Grange, the summer home of the early American leader
- Neo-Gothic Quadrangle of City College campus, with its gargoyles and grotesques
- Trinity Cemetery, the only remaining active cemetery in Manhattan. Clement Clarke Moore ("A Visit from St. Nicholas") and Alfred Tennyson Dickens, the son of Charles Dickens, are buried there.

For more information, visit harlemonestop.com or contact Chin at info@harlemonestop.org.

#### Mummy dearest

Starting this month, visitors to the NTA-member American Museum of Natural History will literally come face to face with the dead from thousands of years ago. From March 20 to Jan. 7, 2018, a collection of 19 rarely seen ancient Egyptian and Peruvian mummies will be on display for the first time in New York City.

"In the exhibition 'Mummies,' visitors can use interactive touch tables and virtually see inside the mummies," says Michael Walker, the museum's manager of media relations. "You can discover what they looked like, how they lived and why they died."

Taken from the vaults of The Field Museum in Chicago, many of these mummies haven't been on public display since the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.

For more information about the mummies and the museum, contact James Cuebas at jcuebas@amnh.org or visit amnh.org. @

The mummy of a teenage Egyptian was discovered inside a wooden coffin by contemporary scientists using X-ray, CT scanning and 3D imaging.



## COMPASS A REGIONAL ROUNDUP OF ITINERARY IDEAS



Starry, starry night: Chaco Culture National Historical Park near Farmington, New Mexico, is home to a number of Native American structures—including the Pueblo Bonita kiva (foreground)—that were built between 850 to 1200 A.D. Turn the page to read more about historical sites and exciting destinations in the U.S. Four Corners region.

Four Corners U.S.

Ontario, Québec and the Niagara Region 42

> Egypt, Israel and Jordan 44

## Four Corners U.S. COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON



#### New museum salutes the Utes

This June, the Ute Indian Museum in Montrose, Colorado, will debut the results of an extensive expansion project. History Colorado, which manages the museum, has collaborated with representatives from a number of local Ute tribes about design elements and has worked closely with them to develop new programming.

"That means the new exhibits will include stories told in their own voices," says Brittany Gutierrez, community relations coordinator for History Colorado, "and that the museum will feature the most authentic and complete collection of Ute Indian artifacts in the nation."

Built in 1956, the museum has displayed thousands of unique items and

ethnographic objects relating to Ute history, as well as works by contemporary native artists. Gutierrez says that, in addition to seeing more items from the attraction's collection in the new gallery spaces, travelers can enjoy more immersive tour offerings.

"Visitors can have hands-on experiences, such as beadwork making and learning how to put up a tipi," says Gutierrez. "If the group is looking to have a relaxing, educational experience, the museum offers a tour of the Native Plant Garden and a showing of the cultural film on the Ute Bear dance."

To learn more, contact Gutierrez at brittany.gutierrez@state.co.us or go to historycolorado.org.

In addition the Ute Indian Museum, History Colorado manages eight other museums across the state:

- Byers-Evans House Museum (Denver)
- El Pueblo History Museum (Pueblo)
- Fort Garland Museum & Cultural Center (Fort Garland)
- Fort Vasquez Museum (Platteville)
- Georgetown Loop Historic Mining & Railroad Park (Georgetown)
- Healy House Museum & Dexter Cabin (Leadville)
- History Colorado Center (Denver)
- Trinidad History Museum (Trinidad)

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FamilySearch Center, where volunteers can help you find information about your family history from the world's largest repository of genealogical records.



visitors' centers and see the *Christus* statue by Danish sculptor Thorvaldsen. Visit the interactive map of ancient Jerusalem (kids love it!) and much more.



of family life of yesteryear will unfold room by room in the Beehive House, the seat of government in early Utah.

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For information on these and many other fascinating venues on Temple Square, go to templesquare.com, or call 1-800-363-6027.



facebook.com/templesquare

## From Sundance to sheepdogs: Utah's got a festival for that

"Every year Utah brings the world together through a variety of festivals celebrating cultural diversity and the human spirit," says Cicily Kind, global production specialist for the Utah Office of Tourism. "[Our festivals] are about family and friends, with a little cultural flavor thrown in to keep things interesting."

Dates for the events listed below are in 2017, unless otherwise indicated. Contact Kind at ckind@utah.gov to learn more about annual festivals in Utah.







#### Sundance Film Festival

Park City | January 2018

The state's signature event brings together independent filmmakers, actors, critics and industry professionals from around the world. For 10 days each winter, they celebrate the best of independent American and international films and enjoy special screenings, red-carpet galas, culinary events and other special programs.

#### Kanab Balloons and Tunes Roundup

Kanab | February 2018

Visitors and locals alike gather each February to see hot air balloons rise into the southern Utah skies. In addition to the balloon flights that go past Kanab's vermilion cliffs, the three-day event includes concerts from headlining musicians, a battle of the bands, a street festival and a vendors market.

#### Scandinavian Heritage Festival

Ephraim | May 27-28

About 650,000 Utah residents trace their ancestry to Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Iceland, and that strong connection to Scandinavia is celebrated annually over the Memorial Day weekend. The event includes dancing, entertainment, storytelling, costumes, tours and gourmet meals featuring traditional cuisine.





## Golden Spike National Historic Site Railroaders' Festival

Corinne | August 12

Railroad fans gather to celebrate the 1869 driving of the Golden Spike, which joined the Central Pacific Railroad and Union Pacific Railroad lines and connected the east and the west via rail. The festival includes a re-enactment of the last-spike ceremony, and enthusiasts also can enjoy tours and rides on vintage locomotives.

## Soldier Hollow Classic Sheepdog Championship & Festival

Midway | September 2-4

The central Utah city hosts America's most attended sheepherding competition each year over the Labor Day weekend. Crowds watch the skillful dogs follow commands from their masters as they herd small groups of sheep across a hilltop field, through gates and eventually into a corral in front of the stands.

#### Zion Canyon Music Festival

Springdale | September 29-30

Regional and national entertainers take the stage in downtown Springfield against a backdrop of the area's beloved rock formations. In addition to taking in the live music, attendees can see handmade musical instruments, art displays and craft booths, and enjoy food from several local restaurants.



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### Get your kicks at these 6 ... on 66

Arizona is one of the top destinations for travelers seeking a real Route 66 experience. And, according to Josh Noble, the area around the city of Kingman in the northwestern corner of the state is the place to be.

"Route 66 continues to be romanticized, much like the Wild West, and it's become very ingrained into American culture," says Noble, who is the tourism director for the Kingman Visitor Center. "Around Kingman, there are bits of original road you can cruise down like it's the 1950s."

He says there are a number of interesting, group-friendly things related to the Mother Road in the area, especially along the stretch of the highway between his city and Seligman. He recommends the following six options for travelers who seek to get their kicks around Kingman:

### 66

### Route 66 Fun Run

2017 will mark the 30th year of this 140-mile journey that brings together Route 66 enthusiasts from across the globe. The event, which is a leisurely car rally and not a race, takes place the weekend before Mother's Day in early May. Participants bring their vintage, custom automobiles, and there are often more than 800 classic cars rolling along the route. The signature event is Friday's 87-mile kickoff ride from Seligman to downtown Kingman.



This local institution features a rustic store front, a tin-can billboard, nostalgic gas pumps and more. It was originally operated by renowned Route 66 artist Bob Waldmire, who traveled the road in his orange 1972 Volkswagen microbus.

### Arizona Route 66 Museum and the Route 66 Electric Vehicle Museum

A number of colorful displays are located in the Kingman Powerhouse building, which was restored as a historical monument and now is home to the museums and the city's visitor center.

### The Grand Canyon Caverns

This attraction has been a longtime favorite of travelers along the Mother Road, dating back to when Highway 66 aligned with the caverns' entrance in 1928. Visitors can head 21 stories underground to see the third-largest dry limestone caverns in the world. Guided tours are available, with the most popular one being a 45-minute walk that covers three-quarters of a mile within the cave system.



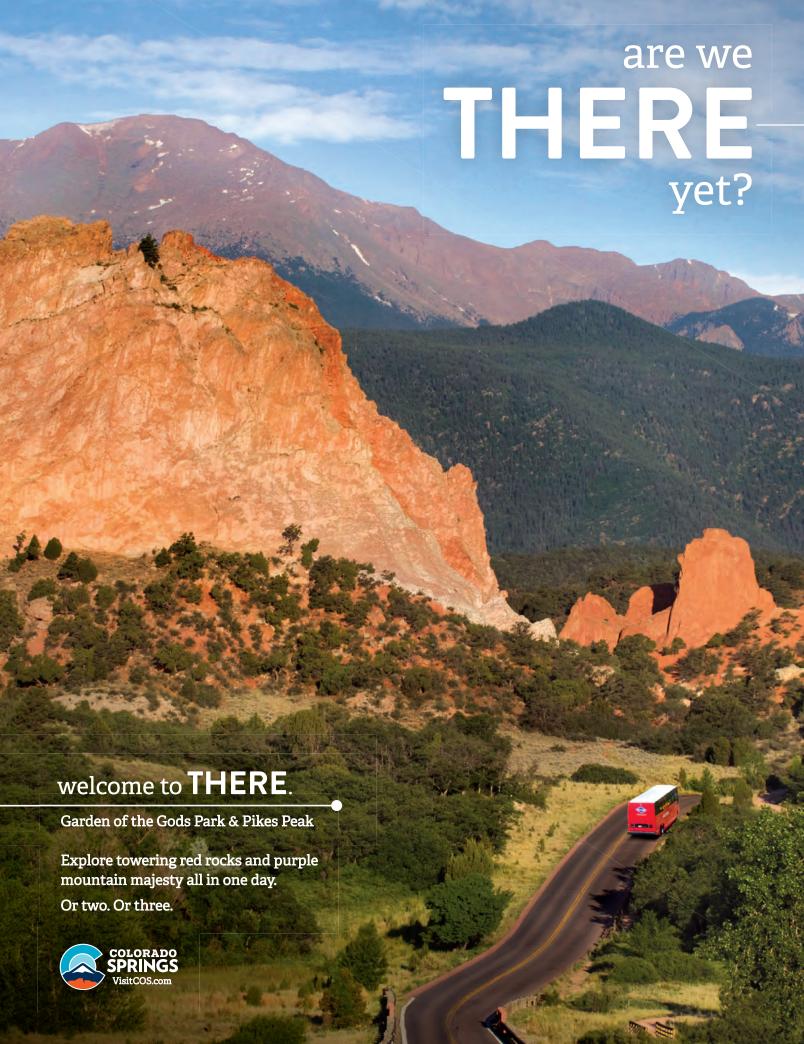
### Angel and Velma's Route 66 Gift Shop

One of the most renowned Route 66 authorities is Angel Delgadillo. Travelers can stop at this store in Seligman to meet and chat with the 89-year-old Delgadillo, who still cuts hair from his space within the gift shop.

### Route 66 Passport

This handy travel guide, available at the Kingman Visitor Center and other locations, provides a thorough overview of all the area's Route 66 highlights.

For more information, reach out to Noble at josh@gokingman.com or visit **gokingman.com**.



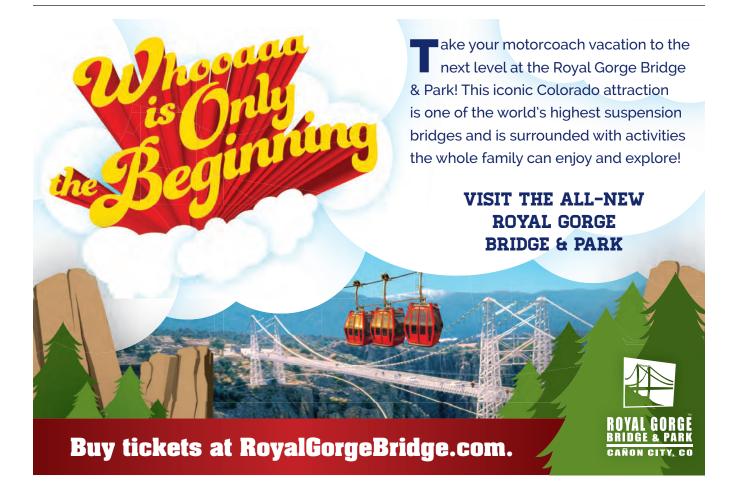
### Ranch life, dudes

Thanks to John Wayne, Lee Marvin and other big-screen cowboys, the American West continues to fascinate travelers seeking their own Western adventures. And while the "City Slickers" craze may have waned a bit over the past couple of decades, places such as the Rockin' R Ranch and Blazin' M Ranch provide a firsthand look at life on the open range. These two NTA-member attractions welcome guests with a mix of the traditional activities such as horseback rides, chuckwagon suppers and cowboy ballads.

Set on thousands of acres in Sandy, Utah, Rockin' R gives visitors a true Western experience. Cattle graze in the meadows and fields on the sprawling property, which offers plenty of space for riding horses, going fishing and taking part in other outdoor adventures.

The attraction's centerpiece is the three-story dude ranch lodge that blends rustic touches with modern amenities. Overnight accommodations are available in 37 well-appointed guestrooms, all located in the main building.





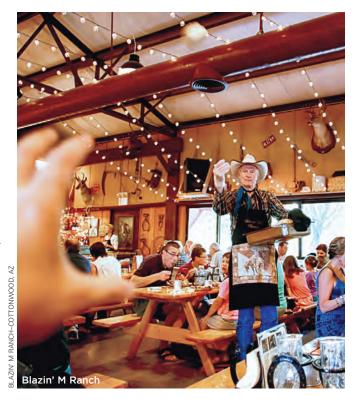
The lodge also is home to Rockin' R's award-winning restaurant. The evening meal in the country-style dining hall includes home-cooked meats, a salad bar featuring side dishes such as baked beans, and the ranch's renowned blueberry cobbler dessert. Live Western entertainment follows the feast.

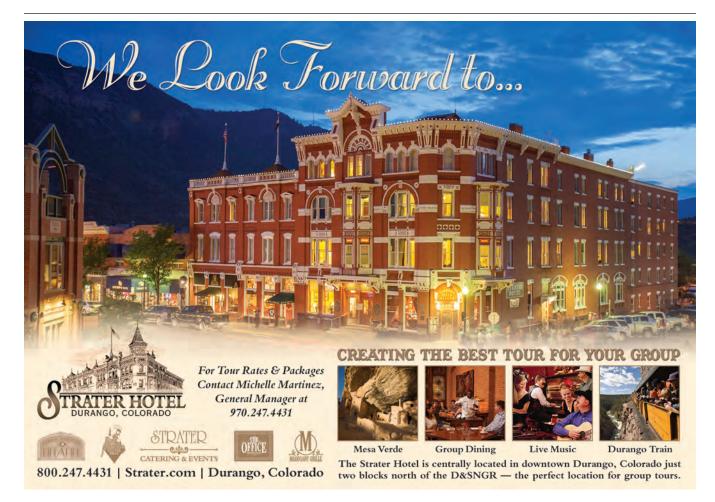
Travelers who find themselves in Sedona, Arizona, often beat a path to Blazin' M. For more than 20 years, the attraction has fed and entertained guests through its signature Western dinner show. When the dinner bell rings—and, yes, it really does—guests are served a meal of barbecue chicken and ribs, cowboy beans, the ranch's prickly pear coleslaw, flying biscuits and special desserts. The evening is capped off by a performance from the Blazin' M Cowboys, who mix traditional songs with humor and poetry.

Before dinner gets started, visitors can wander along the Old Frontier Boardwalk, which features a museum, a shooting gallery, roping lessons, a saloon and farm animals. Retail therapy is close at hand, as the Frontier Town Shops include everything from The Branding Iron and its Western art, accessories and memorabilia, to Rodeo Drive, a boutique featuring modern women's fashions.

To learn more about Rockin' R Ranch, contact Camille Ovard at info@rockinrranch.com or visit rockinrranch.com.

To learn more about Blazin' M Ranch, contact Lori Mabery at lori@blazinm.com or visit blazinm.com.





### Check out Chaco culture and more

Located in the northwest corner of New Mexico, Farmington is a city that beckons outdoor enthusiasts. The area is rich in Native American history, and those sites provide a good anchor for itinerary planners.

"Visitors can step back in time at the Aztec Ruins National Monument or hire Journey into the Past Tours for a unique visit of Chaco Culture National Historical Park," says Kelly May, group sales coordinator for the Farmington CVB.

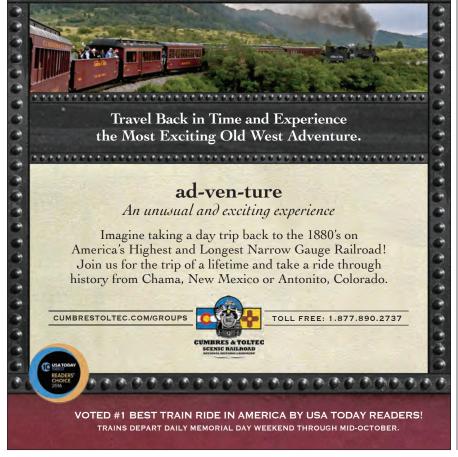
At Aztec Ruins, which was added to UNESCO's list of World Heritage sites as part of the Chaco Culture National Historical Park in 1987, travelers can see ceremonial buildings, multistory great houses and residential structures that were built by

the Pueblos between 1050 and 1300 A.D. They can step inside the Great Kiva, one of the most sacred tribal places, and see the Great House by following a half-mile hiking trail.

Other impressive native sites await at Chaco Culture National Historical Park. Examples of the fine masonry and geometric designs the Chaco people were known for can be found throughout the park. Guided tours shed light on the tribe's rich culture during its zenith from 850 to 1200 A.D.

May says birding and theater offer two additional options for those seeking outdoor activities in the Farmington area. "Groups also can







enjoy bird watching at the Riverside Nature Center or take in live, local theater under the magnificent New Mexico stars at the Outdoor Summer Theater."

At the nature center, visitors can check out numerous species of birds from large windows overlooking a wetland that also attracts a wide variety of wildlife. They also can visit the herb and xeriscape demonstration gardens located adjacent to the facility, and go on guided nature walks through Animas and Berg parks.

Outdoor Summer Theater brings an array of well-known plays and musicals to the stage of its natural sandstone amphitheater at Lions Wilderness Park. Performances take place Thursdays through Saturdays from mid-June to late July, and this year's featured show will be "Shrek: The Musical."

To learn more, contact the May at kelly@farmingtonnm.org or go to farmingtonnm.org.

### **High-roller resorts**

The NTA membership includes the following five resort casino properties in the Four Corners states:

### Arizona

### Cliff Castle Casino Hotel

Camp Verde NTA contact: Nita Neasbitt jneasbitt@cliffcastlecasino.net cliffcastlecasinohotel.com

#### **Desert Diamond Casino Hotel**

Tucson
Denys Marquez
dmarquez@ddcaz.com
ddcaz.com

### Colorado

### Sky Ute Casino Resort

Ignacio Jeffrey Lyman jeff.lyman@skyutecasino.com skyutecasino.com

#### **Ute Mountain Casino**

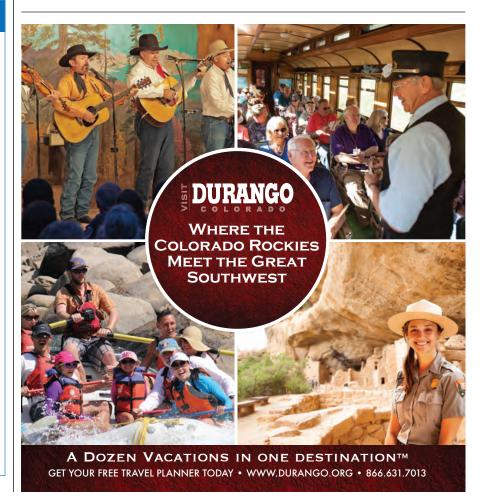
Towaoc Andrea Jo Baker abaker@utemountaincasino.com

#### **New Mexico**

Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort & Casino

Mescalero
Charles Meeks
cmeeks@innofthemountaingods.com
Innofthemountaingods.com







### What goes up, must come down ... and go back up

"The Niagara Skywheel offers breathtaking views of the falls and surrounding city in heated, air-conditioned, fully enclosed gondolas," says Rafael Hermoza, sales and marketing manager at HOCO Entertainment and Resorts, which manages the Ontario-based attraction. "It is a great added value to an itinerary at a low cost."

The Ferris wheel takes guests to a height of 175 feet, and they can see the skyline of Niagara Falls, the Horseshoe and American falls, the Niagara River and Niagara Park. Each gondola seats six, and UV-protective, non-reflective glass reduces glare to yield outstanding panoramas.

"Loading is quick: Six gondolas can load at a time, allowing a tour group to experience the ride and view within 20–25 minutes," says Hermoza. Each ride is a minimum of three revolutions of the wheel, and free coach parking is available on site.

For more about the Niagara Skywheel, contact Hermoza at rhermoza@cliftonhill.com or go to cliftonhill.com.

### Two wild rides in Québec

Two NTA members in Québec offer travelers adrenaline-fueled activities in the great outdoors.



### **Lachine Rapids Tours**

takes guests on a one-hour, high-speed boat ride around Montréal on the St. Lawrence River. The company offers jet boat excursions that take up to 140 passengers through the Lachine Rapids. Speed boat trips use smaller watercraft, and guests experience high-speed turns. jetboatingmontreal.com



### Canyon Sainte-Anne

is a natural attraction near Beaupré that offers beautiful scenery, hiking trails, a 60-meter zipline and climbing. The canyon's cliffs are dotted with lookout points for excellent views of the Sainte-Anne-du-Nord River, and visitors can learn about native plants and animals as they hike and climb. canyonsa.qc.ca

### Celebrate Montréal's history with multimedia attractions

"Montréal is a vibrant, friendly city," says Geneviève Archambault, manager of media and leisure markets for Tourisme Montréal. "It's a very walkable city, very easy to access by bus from major U.S. cities."

An ever-changing list of attractions and events lends to Montréal's vibrancy. Archambault highlighted these new attractions:

**Au Sommet Place Ville Marie** is a 46-story high observation deck in the heart of the city. It opened in summer 2016, and according to Archambault, has "great 360-degree views of Montréal, interactive exhibits, a restaurant and an outdoor terrace on the 44th floor."

**Cité Mémoire** is a series of outdoor multimedia projections in Old Montréal. Created by artists Michel Lemieux, Victor Pilon and Michel Marc Bouchard, the projections feature characters who represent the city's historical inhabitants. Their images are cast onto walls, trees and the ground. For the complete experience, visitors can download an accompanying mobile app with content available in four languages.

**Montréal AVUDO** is a multimedia show created for the 375th anniversary of the city's founding. The piece will look at the relationship between the St. Lawrence River and the people of Montréal, and it will be presented on the water. More than 180,000 spectators are expected for the 100 shows, which will take place this summer.



For more on Montréal attractions, contact Archambault at garchambault@mtl.org or go to tourisme-montreal.org. Tour operators can also check out tourisme-montreal.org/travel-trade for information about bus parking, group restaurants and more. •



### Egypt, Israel and Jordan COMPILED BY BOB ROUSE

### The Jordan Trail—one trek at a time

Jordan's most popular new adventure activity is a 400-mile walking trail that covers the length of the country, from Um Qais in the north to the Red Sea in the south. The aptly named Jordan Trail offers 40 days of inspirational trekking, according to Malia Asfour, director of the Jordan Tourism Board, North America.

"This project, which is still growing and developing, takes you on a journey through the layers of Jordanian landscape and history and provides an encounter with the country's people, their cultures, traditions and cuisine," she says.

You don't have to hike the entire trail. "It can be done in pieces: a portion of the trail in the north, in the middle and in the south," Asfour says. "The terrains, lifestyle and cultural traditions change as you pass through different biogeographic zones."

A sandy trek along the Jordan Trail

The Jordan Trail is broken into eight sections:

Um Qais to Ajloun (49 miles): Highlights of this northerly and green corner of Jordan include Roman ruins, hot springs, mysterious prehistoric structures and villages focused on community-based tourism.

Ajloun to Fuheis (37 miles): From the village of Burma, Ajloun to runeis (5) innes). The trail leads across the King Talal Dam wall and past rich farmlands to the Christian village of Fuheis and a nearby microbrewery.

Fuheis to Wadi Zarqa Ma'in (45 miles): The climate becomes warmer and more arid as the trail passes by scattered Bedouin camps, crosses a plateau overlooking the Dead Sea and descends through basalt canyons. (A wadi is a valley or ravine.)

Three Wadis to Karak (47 miles): Hiking from Wadi Wala Three Wadis to Maran (2) Annual, and Wadi Hidan, trekkers cross Wadi Mujib, the Grand Canyon of Jordan. The trail then crosses a fertile plateau, passes the ruins of Magdelina and ends at the at the imposing crusader castle of Karak.

Karak to Dana (52 miles): From the southern fortifica-Karak to Dana (52 miles). 176... tions of Karak, the trail goes past the abandoned village of Khirbet Ainun, descends to the orchards and olive groves of Al-Iraq, zigzags between limestone cliffs, passes Edomite ruins and arrives in Dana, at the edge of a wildlife reserve.

Dana to Petra (46 miles): Named by National Geographic as one of the best hikes in the world, this section of the Jordan Trail crosses several climate zones and provides the full spectrum of the region's geology, from majestic mountaintops to peaceful countryside. The route ends with Petra, the Nabatean city in the rocks.

Petra to Wadi Rum (68 miles): This trek offers visitors a taste of desert silence as they journey from deep, rugged wadis into sandy plains with sandstone buttes.

Wadi Rum to the Red Sea (40 miles): Heading from Wadi Rum, a World Heritage site with sandstone desert mountains, the trail passes beneath towering cliffs to the Bedouin village of Titen. Following old shepherd paths, hikers will glimpse the Red Sea and the mountains of Sinai before descending down to long sandy wadis to reach the sea.

The best times of year to hike the Jordan Trail vary by regions, but consider late May to mid-September as too hot for trekking.

To learn more about the trail, visit jordantrail.org or contact Asfour at malia@visitjordan.com.

### Set aside seven days (at least) for Egypt

Whether they're lovers of ancient history or fans of films portraying Indiana Jones or James Bond, travelers have long journeyed to Egypt to view its pyramids, temples and the golden treasures of the boy king, Tutankhamun.

But Egypt offers so much more than that, says Romani Gaballa of Egyptian Educational Travel. "We tailor itineraries to give faith travelers great experiences," he says. "Those can

be exploring the exodus route of Moses and the Hebrews or the hiding places of Jesus and Mary."

Along the way, visitors to ancient churches and monasteries can interact with monks and bishops—as well as with other local Christians and Muslims—to gain a deeper understanding of the region's religious dialogue.

EET's tours aren't limited to faith destinations and themes,

though. "Our experiences vary from snorkeling trips in the Red Sea and a safari into the Sahara to visiting businesses, farms, factories and universities and learning about investment opportunities in Egypt."

Gaballa says you'll need to devote a minimum of seven days to touring the country's famous cities, visiting the national museum and taking a Nile cruise to Luxor and Aswan to see the temples of Karnak and the Valley of the Kings.

"We can arrange a visit to all of these attractions, or we can customize a mix of ancient sites and close exposure to the people of Egypt," Gaballa says. "And we work with student groups, faith leaders, university professors and just regular travelers."

To learn more, email Gaballa at romani@egyptianedutravel.com or visit egyptianedutravel.com.

### Israel beckons believers and business travelers

Since its founding in 1976, Amiel Tours has worked with tour operators and travel agencies to bring groups and individual travelers to Israel. Arie Abend, director of sales and marketing, says NTA tour operators might be interested to know that many faith travelers are not first-timers.

"There is a relatively high percentage of repeat visitors among all denominations," Abend says. "That's true for Christians, who are primarily interested in visiting the Christian sites relevant to their denomination, and for Jewish groups, too, for which we provide a variety of itineraries suited to young travelers and older ones, as well as multigenerational programs."

Many visitors come to Israel for business and stay for sightseeing. Abend says his company's tours are, on average, seven days long. He also tracks the popularity of tour destinations. Here are the top four:

- 1. Jerusalem (visited by 79 percent of all tourists)
- 2. Tel Aviv (66 percent)
- 3. The Dead Sea (54 percent)

Cruising on the Nile near Aswan

4. Tiberias (40 percent)

Among specific sites, the most popular are the Western Wall, visited by 71 percent of all tourists, the Via Dolorosa (54 percent) and Massada (28 percent).

While many groups go on faith-based tours—Amiel also packages Israel with European events such as the

Reformation Jubilee and Oberammergau—Abend says his company can also focus on themes as varied as agriculture, food, fashion, bird watching and gardens.

He says more than 100 international carriers fly into Israel, and the country's infrastructure is very developed. "It is easy and safe to rent a car and drive around, and English is widely spoken here," Abend adds.

For more information about Amiel Tours, visit **amiel.com** or email Abend at arieh@amiel.israel.net. �



Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem

# TOP BAR: WHITE PASS & TORON ROOTE PAILROAD, MIDDLE: YVONNE LASMETT/DURANGO AREA TOURISM OFFICE

## Courier's SIGHTSEEING RAIL GUIDE



Taking a train ride recalls a simpler time and allows travelers to take things at a slower pace. A number of NTA members provide unique rail journeys, ranging from seasonal holiday trains to excursions based around local festivals. Themed rides—including beer and wine trains, foliage-viewing trips, photography tours and more—also are increasingly popular. On the following pages, you'll see the list of member companies that offer sightseeing and long-haul train trips.

All aboard! During a ride on the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, passengers can see the majestic peaks, waterfalls and wildlife of southwestern Colorado from their seats on the line's meticulously restored vintage railcars.

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 Jan. 17. Please check NTAonline.com for updated information on NTA-member rail providers and to learn more about the services they offer.

### CANADA

#### **VIA Rail Canada**

Ryan Robutka International Sales 1150 Station St., Suite 300 Vancouver, BC V6A 4C7 +1.604.640.3741 ryan\_robutka@viarail.ca viarail.ca

### **UNITED STATES**

### ALASKA

### Alaska Railroad Corporation

Heather Dudick P.O. Box 107500 Anchorage, AK 99510-7500 +1.907.265.2494 dudickh@akrr.com alaskarailroad.com

#### White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad

Jacqueline Taylor-Rose P.O. Box 435 Skagway, AK 99840-0435 +1.907.983.9821 jtaylor-rose@wpyr.com wpyr.com See this company's ad on page 47

#### **ARIZONA**

#### Grand Canyon Railway

Diane Murdock 1201 W. Route 66, Suite 200 Flagstaff, AZ 86001-6283 +1.928.213.3845 (2267) dmurdock@xanterra.com thetrain.com

### Verde Canyon Railroad

Teresa A. Propeck 300 North Broadway Clarkdale, AZ 86324-2302 877.674.3835 tpropeck@verdecanyonrr.net verdecanyonrr.com

#### **ARKANSAS**

#### Arkansas Missouri Railroad

Brenda Rouse 306 E. Emma Ave., Springdale, AR 72764 +1.479.725.4017 brenda@amrailroad.com amrailroad.com

### **CALIFORNIA**

#### **Amtrak**

Brian Hart 4236 Locust Ave., Long Beach, CA 90807 +1.562.427.2283 hartbr@amtrak.com amtrak.com

### Napa Valley Wine Train

Andrea Guzman 1275 McKinstry St. Napa, CA 94559-1925 +1.707.253.2111 andrea@winetrain.com winetrain.com

#### Railcar Montana

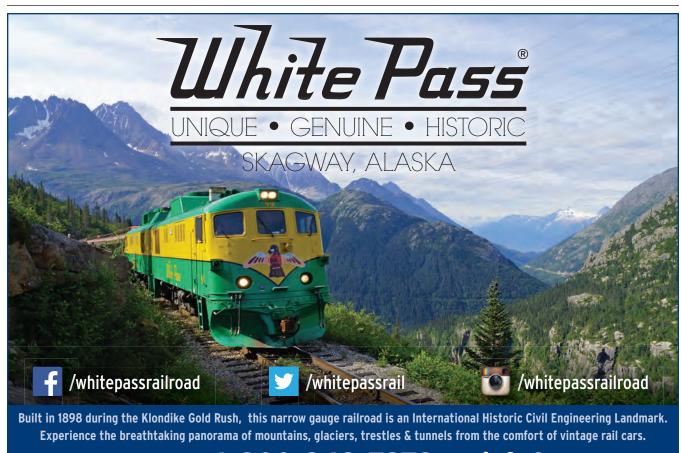
Arlene Post 3318 Jonquilfield Road Westlake Village, CA 91361 +1.805.338.8132 breenpost162@att.net railcarmontana.com

### **Roaring Camp Railroads**

Mrs. Joanne Hirasaki P.O. Box G1 Felton, CA 95018-0346 +1.831.335.4484 joanne@roaringcamp.com roaringcamp.com

#### Sierra Railroad

Chris Hart 221 First St. Davis, CA 95616 +1.530.554.2522 chart@sierrarailroad.com sierrarailroad.com



**wpyr.com • 1-800-343-7373 • i**nfo@wpyr.com

#### **COLORADO**

### Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad

Christian Robbins 479 Main Ave. Durango, CO 81301-5421 +1.970.259.0274 crobbins@durangotrain.com durangotrain.com See this company's ad on page 3

#### Georgetown Loop Railroad

Tom Hill
P.O. Box 249
Georgetown, CO 80444
+1.303.569.0133
tom.hill@historicrailadventures.com
georgetownlooprailroad.com

### Manitou and Pikes Peak Railway Company

Whitney Hedgpeth
515 Ruxton Ave.
P.O. Box 351
Manitou Springs, CO 80829-1921
+1.719.685.5401
whedgpeth@broadmoor.com
cograilway.com
See this company's ad on page 48

#### **MISSOURI**

#### Branson Scenic Railway Inc.

Illa Kamp, CTP P.O. Box 924 Branson, MO 65615-0924 +1.417.334.6110 ikamp@bransontrain.com bransontrain.com

### **NEW HAMPSHIRE**

### Conway Scenic Railroad

Susan W. Logan 38 Norcross Circle P.O. Box 1947 North Conway, NH 03860 +1.603.356.5251 (12) susan@conwayscenic.com conwayscenic.com

### The Mount Washington Cog Railway

Susan Presby 3168 Base Road Mt. Washington, NH 03589 +1.603.278.2255 sue@thecog.com thecog.com

#### **NEW MEXICO**

#### **Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad**

Lee Bates P.O. Box 1057 Chama, NM 87520 +1.575.756.2151 Ibates@cumbrestoltec.com cumbrestoltec.com See this company's ad on page 40

### **PENNSYLVANIA**

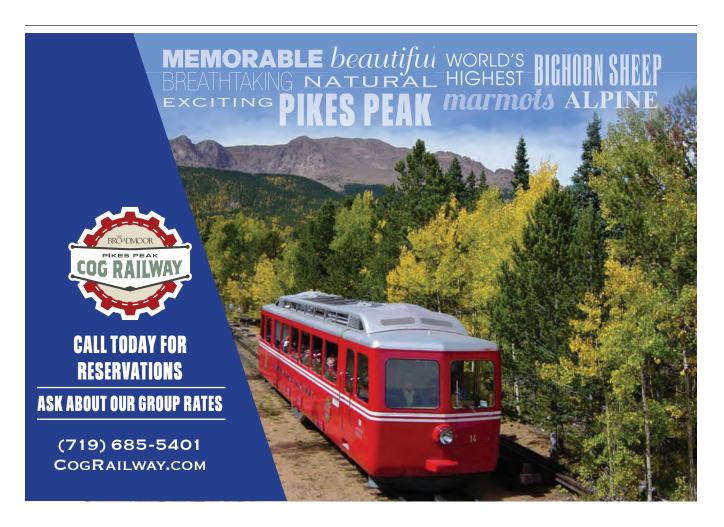
#### Strasburg Rail Road Co.

Ann Musser Route 741 East P.O. Box 96 Strasburg, PA 17579 +1.717.687.8421 ann@strasburgrailroad.com strasburgrailroad.com

### WASHINGTON

#### Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad

Wayne Rankin
P.O. Box 250
Mineral, WA 98355
+1.253.495.7164
wayne@mtrainierrailroad.com
mtrainierrailroad.com



### COMMUNITY NEWS AND UPDATES FROM THE NTA FAMILY



**Everything's coming up Roses:** The Rose Parade brings around 700,000 people including hundreds of tour groups-to the streets of Pasadena, California, on New Year's Day. Turn to page 56 to read how Suzanne Slavitter of Sports Empire Inc. and Red Hot Celebrations has built successful Rose Bowl tours with the help of some NTA supplier partners.

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### **Meet the Members**



### **Visit Delaware**

DOVER, DELAWARE

NTA contact: Tina Madanat, development leader, group tours Office Phone: +1.302.672.6834 Website: visitdelaware.com/groups

NTA member since: 1977

### Talk about the ways your office promotes tourism to Delaware.

From a fun and extensive online presence to a marketing campaign that's been called one of the most successful in America. Visit Delaware has many ways to reach potential tourists. The office focuses on areas like consumer leisure, sports and group tours to share the state's story as a travel destination. In addition to providing traditional tourism planning options, including a new travel guide and state transportation map due out this year, Visit Delaware works to stay on the cutting edge of travel technology with projects like a smartphone application, Snapchat filters and Facebook live broadcasts.

### Have you always been in the travel industry?

I have enjoyed being in the travel and tourism industry for more than seven years. My background in sales, marketing and communications has served me well in the travel industry.

### My job is fun because ...

I have the opportunity to meet and work with so many interesting people to help them plan great group adventures. It's also fun to travel to industry conventions and experience new destinations.

### What new place is at the top of your travel list?

Hawaii has always been No. 1 on my personal travel wish list. A wedding anniversary trip to paradise would be



wonderful (hint, hint to my husband, if he's reading this!).

### What's your favorite destination?

My family is Italian, so my favorite destination is Italy. I really enjoy the food, culture and scenic beauty of the coast-line, mountains and ancient ruins. Italy is rich in history, and the people of Italy are so hospitable.

For more information, contact Madanat at tina.madanat@state.de.us.

### **Cherokee Nation Cultural Tourism**

CATOOSA, OKLAHOMA

NTA contact: Travis Owens, director, cultural tourism and community relations

Office Phone: 877.779.6977

Website: visitcherokeenation.com

NTA member since: 2007

### Tell me a little about what Cherokee Nation Cultural Tourism has to offer.

In 2007, Cherokee Nation Businesses established our department to preserve and promote the history and culture of the Cherokee Nation. In that time, we've reopened three historical sites as museums and are currently working on two more. Our goal is to ensure that future generations can learn about our rich history.

What are some particularly unique experiences your company has put together for tour groups?

We offer three different tour packages

for groups. The Cherokee history tour shows what life was like for Cherokees before and after the forced relocation, or the Trail of Tears. Our Civil War tour visits battlefields and shares the story of Confederate Brigadier General Stand Watie's march through town as he burned Cherokee buildings. We also offer a tour about the "Cherokee Kid," Will Rogers.

### I enjoy my job because ...

As a Cherokee Nation citizen, I take great pride in having the opportunity to help preserve our tribe's history and create opportunities for global visitors to learn about how Cherokees settled in and rebuilt our government following the Trail of Tears.

Why is Oklahoma one of the most important places to visit to learn about Cherokee history?

There is often the misperception that



Cherokees in Oklahoma rode horses and lived in teepees. When you visit our museums, you learn about how advanced we were in terms of education and government. The Cherokee Nation established its roots in Oklahoma more than 70 years before statehood. There's a lot of amazing history to share with our visitors.

For more information, contact Owens at cherokee.tourism@cnent.com.

### Soo Locks Boat Tours and Dinner Cruises

SAULT STE. MARIE, MICHIGAN

NTA contact: Steve Welch, vice president

Office Phone: 800.432.6301 Website: soolocks.com NTA member since: 1980

### How long have you been in the travel industry?

I grew up in the travel business and never left it. I have 42 years of experience, if you count starting out at age 14 selling popcorn at the snack bar on our tour boat. After time serving as a crew member, I became one of the captains at 18 years old, and currently I'm vice president.

### How does going on an excursion with your company help travelers learn more about your area?

The concept of taking passengers through the Soo Locks aboard a tour boat was originated by my grandfather, Milo Welch. Passengers actually

experience the same locking as the larger ships, and sometimes we transit through the Soo Locks right alongside the big ships.

### What are a couple of your most popular tours?

Our sightseeing tour is two hours, dinner cruises are two-and-a-half hours, and the Lighthouse Cruise is four hours. While on the tours, our passengers learn the history of the Soo Locks and the history of Michigan's oldest city, Sault Ste. Marie.

### What other special things do you offer for groups?

We are constantly looking to do more for groups. One area of expansion is themed dinner cruises, and we now offer everything from a 1600sera French Voyageurs Cruise and a Christmas in July Cruise to a Pirate Dinner Cruise.



### If you could get up on stage with any past or present music group, who would it be?

I would have to say Dolly Parton or Elvis or maybe the Beach Boys. Does that make me old?

For more information, contact Welch at sales@soolocks.com.

### **Enchanted Ireland Tours Ltd.**

KILLARNEY, COUNTY KERRY, IRELAND

NTA contact: Sean Fenton, owner/manager

Office Phone: +353.646.671.112
Website: enchantedireland.com
NTA member since: 2005

### How does your company connect travelers with Ireland's rich culture?

We work mainly with U.S. tour operators who want something a little different for their groups. When we plan an itinerary, we like to include some of the lesser-known but equally beautiful parts of Ireland that people don't usually visit on a regular tour as well as the usual highlights. We like to include stops in some of our small colorful towns so visitors can meet the people and get a real feel for the country.

### What are some of the local experiences you offer?

We have included visits to some of our small offshore islands with overnight

stays, as well as fishing trips, traditional music sessions with lunch, cooking classes, guided walks and golf.

### What do you find most interesting about your job?

The most interesting part of my job is travelling to different parts of Ireland

and finding new routes and attractions to create more interesting and fun itineraries.

### Do you have a favorite place that you've traveled to?

Outside of Ireland, my favorite destination is Spain.

What new destination do you most want to visit?



I have never been to Austria, and it's high on my list.

### What's on your personal music playlist right now?

I have some Eagles, Garth Brooks, Tom T. Hall, Johnny Cash, Randy Travis and Irish artists Gerry Guthrie, Dominic Kirwan, Patrick Feeney and lots more.

For more information, contact Fenton at sean@enchantedireland.com.

### **COMMUNITY NEWS**

NTA members are indicated in bold text. Do you have news you'd like to share with the NTA membership? Please send it to Gabe Webb, *Courier* writer, at gabe.webb@ntaservicesinc.com.



### Delaware breaks tourism record

The Delaware Tourism Office announced that the state welcomed a record 8.5 million visitors in 2015. The DMO's director, Linda Parkowski, and Delaware Governor John Carney (above) discussed the record and the broad economic impact of tourism on the state's economy during a February press conference.

"A robust tourism industry is essential to a healthy economy in Delaware," says Carney. "It has been great to see this area thrive across the state. I look forward to continuing that success and the work that makes it possible."

"The efforts of the Delaware Tourism Office to bring in out-of-state visitors are working, and the new brand is a big part of that," says Parkowski. "We see its effect in the website traffic and the visitation numbers."

According to the Delaware Tourism Office, the tourism industry supports 42,000 jobs in the state and contributes \$3.1 billion to the state's economy.

### Sullivan appointed director of sales for Chelsea Hotel, Toronto

Kate Sullivan has been named as the new director of sales for the Chelsea Hotel, Toronto. Sullivan comes to the property from the Edmonton Marriott River Cree Resort, where she was director of sales and marketing for four years. Sullivan has more than 25 years of experience in sales and marketing, and she has worked with Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts and Fairmont Hotels & Resorts.

### Greater Palm Springs CVB announces staff changes

The Greater Palm Springs CVB announced several staff changes in January, including new hires and promotions.



Vicki Higgins is the new director of destination development. She cultivates strategic partnerships with civic and business organi-

zations. Higgins, who has more than 20 years of experience in marketing and business development, previously worked for the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board and Newport Beach & Company.



Mary Ryan is the CVB's new national sales manager, Midwest region, for convention sales. She spent the last 10 years

as business development manager for Visit KC, and has also worked in sales for major hotel brands.



Gary Orfield is now director of travel industry sales. He has nearly 30 years of experience, including executive positions

with Ritz-Carlton, Starwood Hotels & Resorts and Hyatt Hotels.



Robyn Gallegos was promoted to senior travel industry sales manager. She joined the CVB in 2015 and now manages accounts in

the Americas, Australia and New Zealand.



Lori Gomer was promoted to travel industry sales manager. She manages the bureau's relationship with industry partners and repre-

sents the organization at travel shows.



Susan Esterling is the new visitor services partnership manager. She joined the CVB in 2007, and now she oversees the visitor

center and coordinates partner events.

### Branson visitation hits 9 million in 2016

The Branson/Lakes Area CVB says in a press release that the city welcomed 9 million visitors last year and that the past four years represent the Missouri destination's highest period of growth since the 1990s.

Tourism-related tax receipts were up more than nine percent over 2015, and taxes generated by Branson's theaters were up 15.5 percent. Travelers over the age of 55 account for 49 percent of the city's visitors, and 73 percent of all guests see a live music show.

"As the market changes, we will continue to focus on the senior market as part of our plan," says Mike Pitman, national sales director for Sight & Sound Theatres, and chairman of the board for the CVB. "We need millennials and Gen Xers to continue to visit to shop; dine; visit museums, water parks and other family attractions; and enjoy the lake activities."

### DuPage CVB hires new director of sales

The DuPage CVB hired Justin Roach as its new director of sales. He leads the CVB sales staff to elevate the Illinois' county's profile within the tourism industry. He and his team identify and pursue new group business. Before taking this position, Roach provided consulting services to more than 120 CVBs, sports commissions, resorts and hotels.

"Each community that makes up DuPage County brings something different to the table," says Roach. "I'm looking forward to working with the DCVB staff to create new initiatives and grow DuPage on the local, national and even international stage."

"We are all thrilled to have Justin on our team," says Beth Marchetti, executive director of the DuPage CVB. "His experience in the hospitality industry and his portfolio of innovative engagement strategies stood out to us during the interview process. We believe his experience as a consultant to numerous convention bureaus, hotels and sports commissions will bring an edge to DuPage." •



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#### **NEW MEMBERS**

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

### **DMOs**

### City of Eureka

Julie Wood Eureka, MO 63025 USA eureka.mo.us

#### **Rutherford County CVB**

Donna Klempnow Murfreesboro, TN 37129 USA readysetrutherford.com

### Springfield MO Convention & Visitors Bureau

Jill Pearce Springfield, MO 65806 USA springfieldmo.org

### Visit St. Pete/Clearwater

Darryl Boggess Largo, FL 33777 USA visitstpeteclearwater.com

#### **TOUR OPERATORS**

#### Admax Inc.

Roland Sun San Jose, CA 95110 USA gloyoo.com

#### **Adventure Tours**

Adnan Khan Accokeek, MD 20607 USA abdtours.com

#### Mayi Tours Inc.

Jessie Lei Fort Lee, NJ 07024 USA mayitours.com

### New Tour Inc.

Vera Niu El Monte, CA 91731 USA

### **Sunsational Tours**

Jessica Pereira Orlando, FL 32821 USA sunsationaltours.net

### **Umitrip Guam Corporation**

Jason Miller Tamuning, Guam 96931

### Unitedstars International Ltd.

Gang Yu Rowland Heights, CA 91748 USA usitrip.com

### **TOUR SUPPLIERS**

### Arcada Theatre

Gabrielle Fink St. Charles, IL 60174 USA oshows.com

### Best Western Branson Inn & Conference Center

Debi Lipper Branson West, MO 65737 USA bestwesternbransoninn.com

### Cambria Chicago Magnificent Mile

Brady Stroot Chicago, IL 60657 USA cambriachicago.com

### **Charleston Tea Plantation**

Jane Knight Wadmalaw Island, SC 29487 USA charlestonteaplantation.com

### The Charter Bus Factory

Troy Williams New York, NY 10166 USA charterbusfactory.com

#### Cliff Castle Casino Hotel

Nita Neasbitt Camp Verde, AZ 86322-8560 USA cliffcastlecasinohotel.com

#### **Detroit Zoo**

Jenise Collins Royal Oak, MI 48067 USA detroitzoo.org

### **DoubleTree by Hilton Bloomington**

Katy Javoronok Bloomington, IL 61701 USA bloomington.doubletree.com

#### Giri Hotels

Cathi Tingley Portsmouth, NH 03801 USA girihotels.com

#### Go Ape

Lee Robinson Frederick, MD 21701 USA goape.com

### **Hampton Inn Hotel**

Rich Rivers Kayenta, AZ 86033 USA kayenta.hamptoninn.com

### Hilton Columbus at Easton

Joy Bressler Columbus, OH 43219 USA hiltoncolumbus.com

### Hilton San Francisco Financial District

Sharon Stitzel San Francisco, CA 94108 USA sanfranciscohiltonhotel.com

### Holiday Inn Express Albany–Downtown

Shannon Jones Albany, NY 12207 USA ihg.com/holidayinnexpress/hotels/us/en/ albany/albba/hoteldetail

### **Holiday Inn South County Center**

Alicia Nienhaus St. Louis, MO 63125 USA holidayinn.com/stl-sothcnty

### The Hotel Group-Alaska

Tiffany Brooks Anchorage, AK 99518 USA

### **Larkin Hospitality**

Ed Sanders South Burlington, VT 05403 USA larkinhospitality.com

### Marriott International-Northeast

Julia Rashba Emerson, NJ 07630 USA marriott.com

### Mimi's

Jason Wilson Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 USA mimiscafe.com

#### The New York Botanical Garden

Ben Lipnick New York, NY 10458-5126 USA nybg.org

### The Palace Theater

Nancy Bacon Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965 USA dellspalace.com

### Saint Louis Science Center

Michael Wense St. Louis, MO 63110 USA slsc.org

#### Welk Resort Branson

Tammy Slentz Branson, MO 65616 USA welkresorts.com

### TRAVEL PLANNERS

### **Krouse Travel**

Vickie Everhart Manchester, PA 17345 USA krousetravel.com

#### South Seas Travel LLC

Melissa Ortiz Louisville, KY 40205 USA southseastravel.net

### **ASSOCIATES**

### China Ni Hao

Chris Spring New York, NY 10024 USA chinanihao.org

### Parkour3

Karine Miron Montréal, QC H3C 1H9 Canada parkour3.com

### RoamRight

Melissa Prince Hunt Valley, MD 21031 USA roamright.com

### **TourGuide Solutions**

Bridget Pedersen Green Bay, WI 54302 USA tourguidesolutions.com

### Wellness Tourism Worldwide

Camille Hoheb Ranchos Palos Verdes, CA 90275 USA wellnesstourismworldwide.com

<b>ADP</b>	Delta Air Lines, IncInside Front Cover delta.com +1.404.474.2501	Manitou and Pikes Peak Railway Company
American Express	Desert Diamond Casino Hotel	Old Town Museum and Emporium41 burlingtoncolo.com/old-town-museum.htm +1.719.346.8404
Aon Affinity Berkely TravelInside Back Cover berkely.com 800.383.9617	Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad	Ripley's Believe It or Not! Times Square 25 ripleysnewyork.com +1.212.398.3133
Cheekwood Botanical Gardens & Art Museum	Durango Area Tourism Office41 durango.org +1.970.247.3500	Royal Gorge Bridge and Park
Chicago The Musical–National Artists Management Company	Gray Line New York/ CitySightseeing NY Cruises	The Santa Fe Opera
+1.212.575.1044  Colorado Springs	Historic Temple Square LDS Church	<b>Strater Hotel</b>
Convention & Visitors Bureau	+1.801.240.6651 <b>History Colorado</b>	<b>Tourism Cares</b>
Cracker Barrel Old Country Store, Inc 5 crackerbarrel.com +1.615.443.9106	+1.719.583.0453  The Huntington Library, Art Collections & Botanical Gardens	White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad 47 wpyr.com +1.907.983.9821
★ Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad 40 cumbrestoltec.com +1.575.756.2151	huntington.org +1.626.405.2240	1.507.505.5021
Delaware North Companies Parks & Resorts, Inc	Maid of the MistBack Cover maidofthemist.com +1.716.284.8897	

### **NTA EVENTS**

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

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





St. Louis Feb. 26-March 2, 2017



San Antonio Dec. 14-18, 2017



Milwaukee Nov. 4-8, 2018



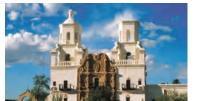


Washington, D.C. March 28-29, 2017





Charleston, S.C. April 19–21, 2018





Tucson, Arizona March 28-30, 2019

## Rosy relationships

BY SUZANNE SLAVITTER

AFTER DECADES of celebrating New Year's at the Tournament of Roses—36 years for my husband, Daniel, and 28 years for me—we still love the event.

Our company, Sports Empire Inc., offers packages that allow guests to attend the Rose Parade and the Rose Bowl game, or they can attend the parade only. For years we used hotel properties near the Los Angeles airport, but this year we moved our entire group to the Anaheim area. After bidding out the business to several properties—NTA members as well as nonmembers—we signed a multiple-year agreement with the Wyndham Anaheim Garden Grove, a longtime NTA member and a 2014 Distinguished Dozen awardwinning hotel.\* Not only is the property newly renovated, but sales manager Donna Coins understands the group market perfectly.

"Working with clients who are a part of NTA offers a family-like feeling," she says. "Over the years I've developed close relationships with clients I initially met through NTA at Travel Exchange."

Donna says ours is not a typical association. "The people are unique, they're down to earth and they're true friends. Attending the convention is like going to your high school reunion, where you can catch up with old acquaintances, talk about your family and just plain



Suzanne Slavitter (left) with Donna Coins at the Wyndham Anaheim Garden Grove

chitchat while conducting business at the same time. I love it!"

Our group had early departures scheduled for each morning, and Donna, along with her team at the hotel, was an especially great partner in figuring out how to provide breakfast to our guests. This may sound like an easy task, but each hotel's sales staff has a different way of working with their restaurant and catering teams.

After a positive exchange of ideas, we reached a solution. The hotel opened the restaurant 15 minutes earlier than their usual time, and they added a second buffet station for an hour—just what we needed. They also provided a boxed-breakfast buffet, positioned

between the elevator and the door we used for loading the bus. It was a perfect way to keep the guests on time and moving along on New Year's Day.

Another key partner for our package is NTA-member Fast Deer Bus Charter, a motorcoach company based nearby in Montebello, California. Our contact is José Gonzales.

"This joint effort translates to happy and repeat customers," he says. "Our relationship with Sports Empire exemplifies reliability, integrity and profound respect, and the annual Tournament of Roses Parade—in the national spotlight—allows this great relationship to shine."

Because of our collaboration with other NTA members, everything was coming up roses at the start of 2017. Our company has been in business for quite a while, with most of our partners now in place. We try to give preference to NTA members because a supplier's membership in our association shows me that they are committed both to group business and to working together.

Suzanne Slavitter and Daniel Chavez own Sports Empire Inc., and Slavitter, who received NTA's Bob Everidge Lifetime Achievement Award in 2015, owns a second company, Red Hot Celebrations.

\*Editor's note: The property was named Crowne Plaza Anaheim Resort when voting was conducted for the 2014 awards



Suzanne Slavitter (wearing a scarf) greets guests as they board the motorcoach.



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