

COURIER

DELIVERING BUSINESS ESSENTIALS TO NTA MEMBERS

APRIL/MAY 2017

Hats off to St. Louis!

Fun, business, camaraderie rule at Travel Exchange **PAGE 25**



EXPLORE FAITH TRAVEL'S VARIED TERRAINS

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WELLS GRAY SEES GREEN IN ANNIVERSARY TOURS

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TIMELESS (AND TIMELY) BOSTON

PAGE 35

TREX '17—and delegates—earn rave reviews



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April/May 2017

Rocks of ages: The Isle of Iona is home to one of the oldest sacred sites in Europe: Iona Abbey, which was founded in A.D. 563. To learn about this and other terrains of faith travel, turn to page 20.

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JULY ISSUE

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

City Spotlight: Louisville, Kentucky

Special Coverage

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

Space Deadline May 5

Material Deadline May 15

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER ISSUE

Destinations Coastal California (Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco); Great Lakes (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin); Southwest U.S. (Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas); Eastern Europe (Croatia, Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia)

City Spotlight: Denver

Special Coverage

Museums
Guide: Museums

Space Deadline June 2

Material Deadline June 12



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Bob Rouse

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DANG IT! I let Travel Exchange '17 in St. Louis slip through my fingers.

There are so many of you I wanted to speak to but didn't. So many members I wanted to interview but couldn't. So many hugs and handshakes that never connected.

Don't get me wrong. I enjoyed our time in St. Louis immensely, and I *did* touch base (or elbows or cheeks) with many members. But I missed many more. Plus, I had more ground I wanted to cover with you. I guess I had a long to-do list with not enough hours in the day.

So with that in mind, I propose a new time zone—TREX Standard Time—for one week in one city: San Antonio, mid-December. Under my plan, TST would create an additional six hours each day—extra time for business, socializing and ... I don't know ... snacks.

Delegates will get their smart phones programmed for TST at the registration desk, and we'll all operate on 30-hour days. (I guess this could cause some calendar problems when we go home, but I'll iron that wrinkle out later.)

For now, I invite you to take a look back at St. Louis (starting on page 25) and enjoy the many significant connections we made

with each other. There was no shortage of hugs and handshakes when NTA's Old War Horses convened. Linda Fort Harvell's essay on page 56 describes the vitality of that gathering.

Faith travel encompasses a wide assortment of groups and experiences, and it also covers a variety of terrains. Turn to page 20 to check out five examples. And take a look at our destination coverage, brought to you in words hand-picked by Pat Henderson, Gabe Webb and Kendall Fletcher, on pages 38 through 46. And Pat directs the City Spotlight on Boston; see pages 35–36.

I hope you enjoy this issue. And I hope you'll keep reading *Courier*, because we're giving you insight from experts, intros to colleagues and insider info about destinations and tours that absolutely floor me every month. I just wish I had more time to experience each one. More time ... dang it!

Write on,

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Joe Luffman, Gaylord
Opryland Hotel & Resort;
LouAnna Henton, Nashville
CVB; and Mark Miller, Sweet
Magnolia Tours, camp it up
during happy hour at Travel
Exchange in St. Louis.

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WAS TRAVEL EXCHANGE really only a month ago? We've already jumped into planning for our December event in San Antonio, so it's hard to know where one ended and the new one begins.

However, we have so many memories that will never fade away, thanks to the amazing team at Explore St. Louis, led by Renee Eichelberger, CTP. They did an awesome job of making us feel welcome and showing off their city. St. Louis is an easy drive from our headquarters, and I'm looking forward to going back for vacation to really explore on my own.

This was my third Travel Exchange as your president, and each one has been unique. I always walk away thinking I met or hugged or shook hands with everyone, and then I'll see a picture and think, "Shucks, I missed talking to them."

One group I did get to know well during our time in St. Louis was those members in pink ribbons, our first-time attendees, who really bonded in our Travel Exchange 101 sessions and at the evening reception and events. They're already planning for San Antonio, too, and want the Class of 2017 to be the best ever!

To all our attendees and our generous sponsors, those folks we can't do without: Thank you for your investment in NTA. My staff and I hope you experienced a productive and fun week with us in St. Louis.

I want to also thank Justin Osbon of Image Tours, who was an outstanding leader for NTA this past year as our chair. As

a baby boomer, I thought I was going to teach him a thing or two, but that millennial taught me a lot. Next time you see Justin, thank him for his steady guidance.

Now we begin with a new chair, Jay Smith from Sports Travel and Tours, and his new rallying cry of Just Bring One. During his remarks at Travel Exchange, Jay challenged attendees to bring one new member into the NTA family and to the convention in San Antonio. He knows that with more members, NTA offers more opportunities to create valuable business partners, access new markets and share ideas.

"Every member at Travel Exchange and every member in NTA represents a unique experience," Jay said. "The more connections we can make, the more hands we can shake, the more product options there are, the more market experts we can tap into, the better it is for each of us and our travelers—so just bring one!"

Watch for *Courier's* Q&A with your new chair in our June issue, when he'll share more about his mantra and explain how you can benefit by getting involved.

As reported last month, I flew to Delhi (courtesy of Delta Air Lines) for the U.S.–India Travel and Tourism Partnership Year Celebration with Brand USA, the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Ministry of Tourism for India. It was a great event, and I connected with longtime NTA members from Creative Travel—brothers Rajeev and Rohit Kohli—and Uday Marwah of Uday Tour & Travel. Uday was kind enough to take me on a tour of Delhi; our photo is below. There is much growth potential for India, both inbound and outbound, and we will keep you abreast of this emerging market.

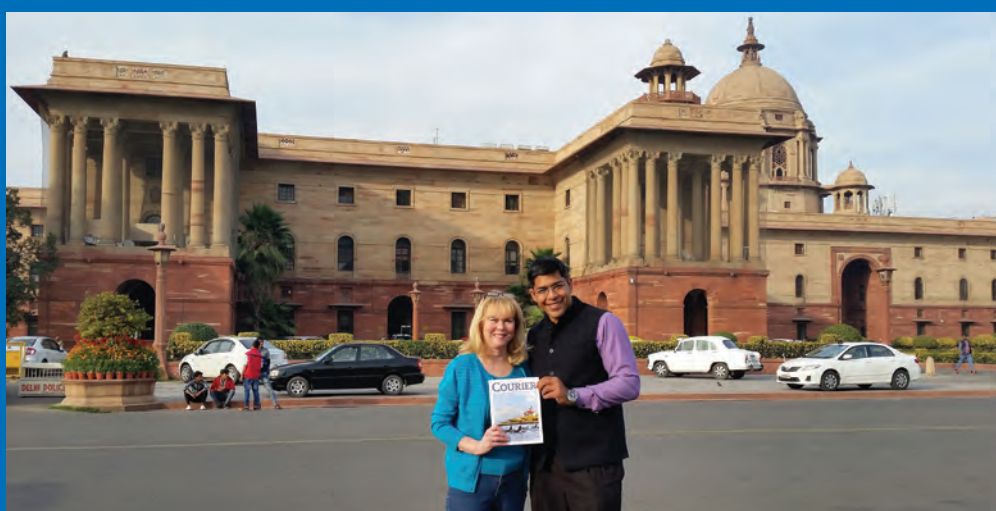
It's time to get back to planning for San Antonio; one member already has sent me an idea for another onstage antic. You'll have to be there to see what it is.

Cheers,

Pam

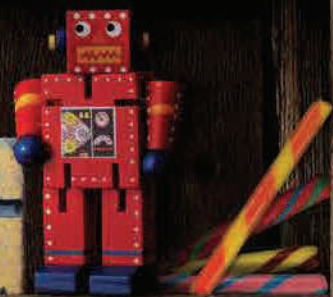
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Pam poses with NTA member Uday Marwah in front of a parliament building in Delhi, India. Email your photo with *Courier* to bob.rouse@ntastaff.com.



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COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

NTA product development trips headed to Louisiana, Iowa

NTA will offer two product development trips in 2017: One will take tour operator members to southern Louisiana in May, and another will be centered around Des Moines, Iowa, in September. These trips are designed to help operators experience a destination firsthand and to put them in touch with local partners who can help them build itineraries.

The Plantations, Southern Charm & Cajun Culture PDT goes from May 22–28 and will feature a range of Louisiana's historical and culinary tour product. During the trip, the group will spend two days in three destinations. In New Orleans they will explore the French Quarter and the city's thriving music scene; in Lafayette they will visit cultural attractions and take a swamp tour;

and in New Orleans Plantation Country they will see historical mansions along the Great River Road.

The Catch Des Moines tour, which will take place Sept. 27–30, will provide a look at Iowa's vibrant capital city. With a focus on culinary and agritourism, the PDT will cover everything from botanical gardens and state-of-the-art research farms to craft breweries and farmers markets. Visits to Des Moines' urban sculpture garden and renovated railroad district also are on tap.

The cost for each is \$175, and interested tour operators can contact NTA's Dawn Pettus at dawn.pettus@ntastaff.com with questions about both PDTs. Additional details on the trips, including registration information, is available at ntaonline.com/events/product-development-trips.



Louisiana street parade

TODD COLEMAN, SAVEUR MAGAZINE



Des Moines skyline

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/BARBARA LN: btlly2mUwye

May 7–13 is U.S. National Travel and Tourism Week

U.S. tourism professionals will celebrate the impact their industry has on the country during National Travel and Tourism Week, which will take place May 7–13.

The celebration highlights the key role the industry plays as an economic driver and job creator as well as the positive effects travel has on countless destinations, families and individuals across the country. Travel companies typically mark the week in a variety of ways, from staging local events for Travel Rally Day (May 9) to media outreach campaigns, special promotional packages and consumer giveaways.

To learn more about this year's event or to find out how you can get involved, go to ustravel.org/events/national-travel-and-tourism-week. The site includes

a detailed toolkit featuring many resources and marketing ideas to help you plan your activities.

As part of its focus on City Tourism this year, Tourism Cares has scheduled its main 2017 give-back event for National Travel and Tourism Week. Hundreds of industry professionals will gather in Detroit for "Travel's Big Give" May 11–12 and help with hands-on service projects throughout the city. Registration for the project is now open at tourismcares.org/detroit.



PAT HENDERSON

Tourism Cares will hold a work project in Detroit May 11–12 during National Travel and Tourism Week.

NTA adds new corporate and strategic partners

As part of its ongoing efforts to add value to your membership, NTA recently entered into agreements with two new corporate partners, Avis Budget and Rezgo, and one new strategic partner, Travel Professionals of Color. Here is a brief look at each of the new partners:

Avis Budget The company will offer NTA members discounts of up to 25 percent off base rates from Avis and Budget. These special rates are available on a wide selection of vehicles, from eco-friendly compacts and hybrids to luxury sedans.

Rezgo This organization brings together sightseeing tours, activities, excursions and events across the globe on one site. Rezgo works with travel brands such as Expedia, TripAdvisor and Viator.

Travel Professionals of Color Founded in 2002, the association unifies and mobilizes its members around the globe, providing training and networking opportunities for them.

To learn more about these organizations, as well as NTA's other corporate and strategic partners, visit ntaonline.com/partners. ☎

RELATING TO GOVERNMENT

INSIGHTS ON U.S. LEGISLATIVE ISSUES AND INDUSTRY TOPICS



The U.S. Transportation Security Administration: Securing our flights and our future

CREATED IN 2001 in response to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the Transportation Security Administration is an agency of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that has authority over the security of the traveling public in the United States. Last year, the TSA screened some 738 million passengers (more than 2 million per day), 466 million checked bags and 24.2 million employees at 450 U.S. airports. Confronted with long lines and more travelers than ever before, the TSA continues to face a formidable challenge securing the nation's transportation systems.

The TSA is an important part of our nation's safety posture, and to function effectively, it must continue to develop as an agency with a dedicated and professional workforce. The FAA Extension, Safety and Security Act of 2016, signed into law last July 15, contains a number of provisions aimed at reinforcing and improving airport security measures.

Although the extension didn't comprehensively update the agency, it advanced certain aspects of the agency that relate to NTA priorities. The act expanded the TSA's PreCheck program, which aims to shorten security wait times by expediting searches, and it tightened airport access controls and increased the vetting of airport employees.

Throughout 2016, NTA advocated for enhanced TSA PreCheck enrollment capabilities. The extension created two pilot programs to improve screening-line configurations—which includes new airport screening and checkpoint technology—with the goal of increasing security and efficiency. While progress was made in 2016, more needs to be done.

The House and Senate are continuing discussions on how to further

improve the TSA. The House Homeland Security Committee held a hearing on Feb. 2, 2017, titled "The Future of the Transportation Security Administration." The hearing examined how the TSA can adjust to confront evolving threats and how to combat internal staffing issues. It provided an opportunity for outside experts to elaborate on steps the TSA can take to effectively achieve its mission of protecting the nation's transportation systems.

"Although TSA is one of the youngest agencies in the federal government, it has come to operate as an entrenched federal bureaucracy."

—Rep. John Katko

Rep. John Katko, R-N.Y., who chairs the Transportation and Protective Security Subcommittee, said, "Although TSA is one of the youngest agencies in the federal government, it has come to operate as an entrenched federal bureaucracy. This means that often-times it fails to achieve important efficiencies, and it lacks the flexibility to respond to an ever-changing threat landscape. I believe that with the start of this new administration, we have a unique opportunity to affect positive change at TSA."

In the other chamber, the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee held a hearing titled "Stakeholder Perspectives on Improving TSA for the Security of the Traveling Public." The hearing was intentionally

held before President Trump has nominated a TSA Administrator to allow committee members to hear from a variety of aviation community stakeholders about their concerns, thereby informing committee members about issues that ought to be raised in a future confirmation hearing.

NTA will continue supporting a robust budget for the TSA so that the agency may hire, train and retain an adequate number of security screeners, as well as improve our nation's security posture in the process. NTA also supports expedited screening programs, such as PreCheck, and encourages efforts to expand the program and increase enrollment. As the administration and Congress put pen to paper on an infrastructure package and an FAA authorization, we can expect at least some of these upgrades to be addressed.

To further build on the travel and tourism sector's growth, the administration and Congress need to act on critical measures that are being discussed today, including increasing the investment in travel infrastructure, expanding the U.S. Visa Waiver Program and improving travel security. The upcoming expiration of FAA authorization on Sept. 30, 2017, will provide the government with a prime opportunity to address these stakeholder concerns and continue to strengthen the TSA.

NTA will remain engaged and be part of the conversation to continue to make necessary improvements in support of the travel and tourism industry. ☎

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

Next, please

After a successful centennial celebration, the U.S. National Park Service looks to its second century

BY DONALD LEADBETTER,
U.S. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



Donald Leadbetter

IN 2016 the U.S. National Park Service commemorated its 100th anniversary with a yearlong celebration, achieved with the support of a wide array of partners, that generated unprecedented public engagement. The once-in-a-century event created a groundswell of support among the American public and national park enthusiasts across the world that will propel the agency into a second century of caring for the natural and cultural treasures of the United States.

From the outset, the National Park Service established a centennial goal to connect with and create the next generation of park visitors, supporters and advocates. Working with the National Park Foundation, the NPS launched the Find Your Park movement to engage younger audiences, while also welcoming Americans and travelers who love the national parks and public lands.

Find Your Park/Encuentra Tu Parque reached new and diverse audiences

Since its launch in 2015, the Find Your Park ad campaign—and its Spanish-language counterpart, Encuentra Tu Parque—has engaged hundreds of

millions of people across the country and throughout the world. The campaign garnered significant national attention through print and web media, public service announcements, public relations, live events, social media campaigns and donated advertising.

Over the course of the centennial, NPS social media accounts added millions of new followers, greatly increasing the digital community of park enthusiasts and supporters. Additionally, traditional media coverage of national parks in 2016 significantly eclipsed coverage in prior years. The Find Your Park campaign will continue in 2017, and the travel industry is invited to partner with the National Park Service to maintain the momentum built over the last two years.

Thousands of centennial events

Throughout 2015 and 2016, parks and partners across the country hosted high-profile events and special programs to celebrate the centennial, everything from the 2016 Rose Parade to special concerts, citizen science events, endurance challenges and much more. Thousands of activities in parks and communities offered a variety of ways for visitors to join the anniversary celebration.

Visitors flocked to the parks

Visitation to national parks broke records in 2016, as Americans and international travelers joined the celebration. Total visitation to the entire park system in 2016 increased by 7.7 percent over 2015 to 330 million visits.

Many of the most popular parks, such as Yosemite and Zion, set visitation records, but lesser-known hidden gems experienced a surge in visitation as well. Parks as diverse as San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, Cedar Breaks National Monument, Joshua Tree National Park, Fort Smith National Historic Site and Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway saw sharp upticks in visitation across the centennial. While in some places the surge presented challenges to park staff, the engagement and interest of park visitors was welcome; it is vital for the long-term public support for the parks.



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

George Washington Carver National Monument, Missouri



Natural Bridges National Monument, Utah

Support from the tourism industry

The tourism industry also took part in the centennial commemoration in a variety of ways. Operators, packagers and outfitters highlighted national parks and NPS programs in their tour products and itineraries, while destinations supported the celebration with digital and social media promotion, sponsorship of special events and advocacy.

Tourism Cares sponsored a highly successful yearlong volunteer program that generated 5,000 hours of volunteer time, valued at \$117,000, to five parks and gateway communities. Volunteerism, philanthropy and advocacy are vital supporting elements for the long-term sustainability of the national parks, and the tourism industry enthusiastically demonstrated its support during the centennial.

Looking ahead

The centennial leaves a legacy for the National Park Service that continues beyond 2016. Initiatives started in 2015 and 2016 will continue to develop, including Every Kid in a Park, Centennial Challenge projects, new and improved facilities, and the NPS Urban Agenda. The National Park Service and National Park Foundation will build on

the public-private partnerships created and strengthened during the centennial to leverage more public and private support for parks and NPS programs.

The National Park Service Centennial Act, passed in December 2016, will provide new tools, revenue and systems that will help the NPS meet the challenges of its second century. Among its many provisions, the bill establishes an endowment fund with the National Park Foundation to support projects and activities in service of the NPS mission.

The Find Your Park movement will continue to engage new audiences, and the travel industry is welcome to partner with the National Park Service to continue the momentum in 2017 and beyond. The National Park Service and its partners invite the public to explore new parks, build personal connections to remarkable places across the country and find ways to help ensure that future generations are able to experience America's treasures. 📍

Donald Leadbetter is national tourism program manager for the National Park Service. He spoke to NTA members at the Government Relations Breakfast Bistro during Travel Exchange in St. Louis. For more information about the agency and its programs, visit nps.gov.

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Livestreaming video: Examples, strategies ... success!

BY CATHERINE HEEG



IMAGINE SHOWING your current and potential clients a glimpse of what their vacation could look like—live and in the moment. Unpolished, unvarnished and real.

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Livestreaming video gives you the chance to satisfy this desire for your clients, and it's simple. Using your phone's camera—plus an external microphone if you want to capture interviews or testimonials—you're ready to roll.

Success stories

Travel Oregon uses Facebook Live to showcase Oregon moments of Zen: sunsets, rushing rivers and skiing at Mt. Hood. Emily Forsha, the DMO's content and community manager, told me Travel Oregon is going live and gaining huge organic reach. They also use Periscope to livestream interviews.

After Hurricane Matthew hit the Georgia coast last October, Lauren Cleland, digital content strategist for **Visit Savannah**, and her team used Facebook Live to shoot four videos showing that Savannah was alive and well. They visited a variety of sites to showcase the vitality of the city despite the force of the hurricane. Armed with a selfie stick, a short tripod and an external microphone, Lauren and her crew hit the town. She offered these tips to keep audience engagement high:

1. Reiterate your topic often, so newcomers understand the point of the live video.
2. Introduce yourself and your location periodically, as people are joining in at random times.
3. If you have high retention, keep going. The livestreaming video series garnered more than 100,000 views. One



video alone attracted some 83,000 viewers and was aided by a small ad budget.

Facebook has a 1.5 hour limit on live streaming broadcasts, but the longer you go live the higher your viewership will be. Visit Savannah proved this point with a 90-minute view of the city's St. Patrick's Day parade. It earned more than 40,000 views.

Travel Alberta also has had success using Facebook Live. Susan Darch, director of global media and content for Travel Alberta, uses social media influencers to help reach a wider audience when she livestreams the Calgary Stampede.

Don't have a stampede, weather event or ski slope to showcase? An inside look at your organization can draw viewers. Leaders of the Student Youth Travel Association have used Facebook Live to livestream the beginning of their board meeting. Providing viewers with a quick intro and meeting overview, they attracted more than 1,200 views. Impressive!

Strategies for livestreaming video

Before

- Market your broadcast.
- Invite group leaders and prospective travelers.
- Check lighting and camera positioning.
- Create an attention-grabbing headline or title.

While you're live

- State the questions you see popping up on the screen and answer them.
- Smile and add fun (if appropriate).

- Try using a tripod to stabilize. It will still be a bit shaky.
- Use an external microphone for better sound quality.
- If interviewing someone, use a directional microphone.

Afterwards

- Edit to add title, tags, captions, etc.
- Save your broadcast to your webpage.
- Share the replay on other social sites.

While Facebook is the biggest player due to their built-in audience, Periscope, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter also offer livestreaming video. (Compare the options here: bit.ly/2lqNJXT.) Keep in mind that you can go live in a Facebook Group if you'd like to limit your audience.

Go live

Still not sure how you could use livestreaming video in your own marketing? Consider these ideas:

- Livestream from a trade show, giving viewers a chance to chime in with questions for other attendees.
- Livestream from a site inspection; invite your pied pipers to join and ask questions.
- Provide a day-on-the-road snapshot via livestream.
- Showcase events and festivals.
- Go live on a city tour or at a new attraction.

With the technology in your back pocket and your creativity on fire, livestreaming video generates organic reach and gives you the opportunity to inspire travelers and followers.

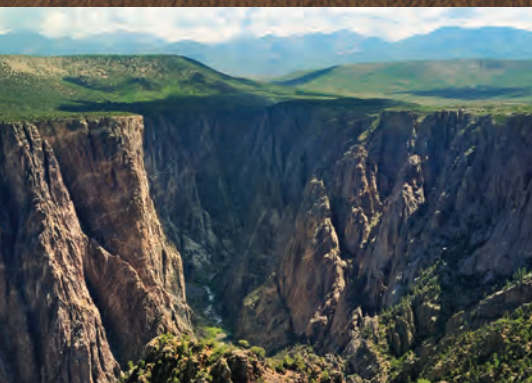
Let the camera roll! What will you show in your next livestreaming broadcast? 📹

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

TAKE PEOPLE BEYOND WHAT THEY KNOW

Some states aren't as lucky to even have one. Colorado has four national parks, each renowned for their beauty and recognized for their attractions. Stumble upon ancient cliff dwellings or the tallest sand dunes in the country. Tour through unmistakable black canyons and the unforgettable Rocky Mountains in all their glory.

[TOURS.COLORADO.COM](https://tours.colorado.com)



Celebrating Anniversaries, from Reno to Juneau

BY ROLAND NEAVE, CTP



Roland Neave

TOURS CELEBRATING your company's anniversary are an excellent way to market your business, promote your many years of service and reward longtime customers. Every company with longevity should do this.

I started Wells Gray Tours in 1972, and our 45th anniversary will be celebrated this year with nearly 700 customers on an Alaska cruise with Norwegian Cruise Line in May. We have offered an anniversary tour since 1982 and have found them to be extremely successful and profitable.

I got into the travel business when I was a 20-year-old education and geography student at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia. BC Hydro, the provincial power utility, planned to build seven dams on the Clearwater River in a wilderness area near Kamloops called Wells Gray Provincial Park. An environmental group decided that, instead of lying down in front of bulldozers, they would run bus tours to the park and show people the beautiful vistas that would be destroyed by the dams and reservoirs. I joined as a guide and spent a wonderful summer taking passengers to the park.



Visitors to Wells Gray Provincial Park look into Third Canyon during a 1972 tour with the author.

When we got word that BC Hydro had cancelled the dams and Wells Gray Park had been saved, we hoped it was due to our modest efforts, although other dams had just been completed and the province probably didn't need the power.

During the next three years, I spent my summers with fellow geography students running the tours with the help of grants from the Canadian government. We called ourselves Wells Gray Park Bus Tours, as that was the only place we went.

I graduated in 1975 and, to my shock, nobody rushed forward to offer me a

job in either teaching or geography. That's when Wells Gray Tours got its streamlined name and became a business. I decided to try a longer tour to California—down the Oregon Coast and through the redwoods to San Francisco, Yosemite Valley, Death Valley, Reno, Lassen Volcanic National Park and home to British Columbia. We did that exhausting itinerary in 10 days; I charged only \$150.

There were no schools to teach me how to be a tour operator, so I learned as I went along. I escorted every tour while my father answered the phone and took bookings for the next trip. In 1978 I started running tours to Reno, the closest casino mecca, with an overnight stop in Baker City, Oregon.

When I realized that my hometown of Kamloops could not support a tour company by itself, I opened offices in three nearby cities in the Okanagan Valley. Reno was so popular that we had up to four coaches departing most weekends for eight days. Fares were often as low as \$99.

On our 10th anniversary, I offered a special promotion for Reno that included a party featuring a magician, The Amazing Elliott. This added about \$10 to the cost of the tour. Some people grumbled about the



Neave titles this photo from a 1977 tour to Death Valley, "What a place to take a bathroom break."

expense, but the concept of an anniversary tour filled coaches.

I joined NTA in 1983 to get ideas for itineraries offered by other companies, and throughout the next decade, sight-seeing tours, cruises, theater trips and international excursions became our focus. During that time, our anniversary tours to Reno became more elaborate and expensive, but customers did still see value in these events.

For a few years we celebrated our anniversary in Spokane, Washington, usually tied to a musical at the theater. Planning for our 25th anniversary in 1997, a bold and almost reckless idea came to mind: Maybe we could sell a ship full of people.

I approached Holland America Line and chartered the *Rotterdam* for a four-day cruise on the BC coast. The terms were downright scary: a deposit of \$50,000 to be paid 18 months in advance and an irrevocable letter of credit for the balance of \$450,000. This meant we could not cancel the charter for any reason; if sales bombed, I was on the hook for a lot of money.

We announced the 25th anniversary tour on the drive home from Spokane in 1995 and took over 200 bookings that day. To my great relief, we were completely sold out a year in advance, with 1,100 passengers.

The 25th anniversary cruise was a momentous achievement, but I have never been brave enough to try a ship charter again. And because of the work and organization required, we started celebrating Wells Gray Tours' anniversaries every fifth year.

The 30th anniversary had nearly 500 bookings and traveled on the Rocky Mountaineer train, with a stay at the Fairmont Banff Springs hotel. For the 35th anniversary, we filled half of Holland America's *Oosterdam* for a four-day cruise with stops in Victoria, British Columbia; Astoria, Oregon; and Seattle. The 40th anniversary attracted about 600 customers for a seven-day Alaska cruise on the *Zuiderdam*.

For the past year preparations have been underway for our 45th anniversary tour, a nine-day cruise to Alaska on the *Norwegian Jewel*. Since the itinerary was similar to the 40th anniversary, I changed

cruise lines and booked Norwegian because of their major presence at NTA.

I think the Norwegian group department was a little startled when we requested 300 staterooms, since they were used to tour operators wanting 25. Our Canadian contact with Norwegian, Sabrina Greca, went to bat for us, even though we had booked only one previous cruise with the company. I wish I could have been a fly on the wall at Miami headquarters when our bookings exceeded the 300 staterooms and we asked for more.

Marketing an anniversary tour requires different tactics than a regular tour, since we want to sell to hundreds of people

customers who have taken 15, 25 or 50 tours, respectively, and all 100-plus of them are invited to special dinners hosted by our family and senior managers. This year we are introducing a diamond level for customers who have traveled more than 70 times with us; six will be recognized on the ship.

So that others don't feel left out, we have a party for first-time customers and one for those who have traveled between two and 15 times. Another party is for the entire group. Norwegian is providing their unlimited beverage package, so I'm sure there will be lots of happy times on the ship.



Neave, right, with his driver during a tour in 1973.

and attract early bookings. The 45th anniversary was announced on June 1, 2016, with a mailing to more than 6,000 regular customers. We gave away free staterooms to local media in exchange for the interviews and contests they conducted. One radio station put us on the air six times a day and garnered more than 2,000 contest entries. The publicity was well worth the cost of a stateroom.

We offered an early-booker discount of \$80 for every reservation received in June, and everybody who booked by July 31 was entered in a drawing for a free upgrade to a Haven suite. (The winner had been in an inside stateroom and was thrilled to move to the second-best suite on the ship). We had subsequent drawings for early-bookers, with winners choosing a helicopter or hovercraft excursion in Juneau.

During anniversary tours we have bronze, silver and gold rewards for

Based on our success since 1982, I think anniversary tours can work for most tour operators who have longevity to boast about. Make it unique, don't run it too often, start promoting a year in advance, don't plan too many other tours within that month and provide lots of opportunities for socializing. Your owner should be front and center at every event because customers love to meet the boss.

Our staff soon will start debating what to do for our half-century milestone. Sometimes I find it hard to believe that I have spent 50 years in this wonderful industry. As I look back on our fledgling year of 1972, I wonder what my career might have been if BC Hydro had not wanted to build those dams in Wells Gray Park. ☘

Roland Neave is founder and owner of Wells Gray Tours, headquartered in Kamloops, British Columbia.

Members tell the story #TREX17

St. Louis hosted us for Travel Exchange '17 part one—and boy did they welcome us with open arms. During our week together, we created new business, formed friendships and made lasting memories. The city and convention center were full of energy, and you documented it well on social media using #TREX17. We've gathered some of your posts to help us look back on our time in St. Lou.



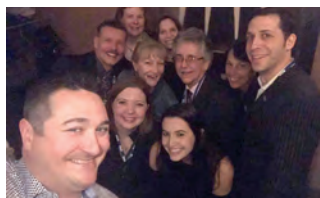
Frances Smith Manzitto
#TREX17 shenanigans

TAP Talk @TAPtalk

#TREX17 and St. Louis are a great combination!! fb.me/YSladVtb



Dave Nitkiewicz @DNitkiewicz
Very grateful to be named one of the National Tour Association's Top 5 Young Professionals! #TREX17



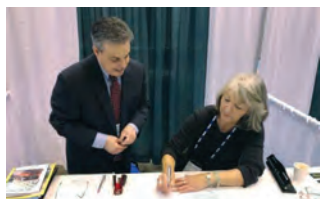
Benjamin J Maddy
NYC & Co Dine Around
#TREX17

Abby Thibodaux Trauth, CTIS

Just finished requesting connections with my new NTA pals. Thank you all for sharing your knowledge with me. Please reach out if you're ever in New Orleans; I'd love to reconnect! #tourism #partners #NTA #TREX17



Jennifer Royse
Party in the USA at #TREX17 with Bond Milburn



Michael Weinberg, CTP, CTC
Real business getting done at NTA's Travel Exchange. Immediate ROI! Thanks, Dana! #TREX17 #wearehilton



Butchart Sales @ButchartSales
Congratulations to our friends at @TravelPortland and @TravelOregon on being named @NTAnews Shining Stars! #TREX17



Paul Nakamoto with Justin Osborn
Justin officially drags the floor! #TREX17

Malia Asfour @MaliaAsfour

Jordan Tourism Board North America wins @NTAcourier Distinguished Dozen award! Thank you @NTAnews #TREX17



Allison French
From Broadway to silly photo ops and a late night view of the Arch, it was a fun day at #TREX17



Las Olas Travel @las_olas_travel
CEO and Co-founder Rachel Wilson representing Las Olas Travel at the NTA Travel Exchange conference 2017 in St. Louis! #TREX17



Renee Eichelberger-Niklich
My last post for today. I wanted to say thank you to everyone who helped this week and this past year with planning for NTA #TREX17. Big shoutout to Katey Pease and the entire NTA team; you guys are amazing. Safe travels to everyone heading home today, and I hope to see you back in St. Louis soon. #explorestlouis #lovewhatido #TREX17

Next up: #TREX17 | San Antonio | Dec. 14-18

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BLACKHILLSBADLANDS.COM

Erosion in motion

Badlands National Park consists of colorful pinnacles, buttes and gorges, as well as one of the largest areas of mixed grass prairie in the United States. During a visit to the 244,000-acre park, located an hour east of Rapid City, South Dakota, travelers can see the beautiful and bizarre results of thousands of years of erosion that have left behind vivid orange, red, purple, yellow and white sedimentary layers.

The site is renowned for its countless fossil beds, which date back to the Oligocene Epoch of the Age of Mammals. Skeleton remains of species ranging from horses and camels to saber-tooth cats and creatures resembling rhinos have been unearthed in the park.

The typical starting place for exploration is the Ben Reifel Visitor Center. Groups can see exhibits covering the area's human history, paleontology, geology, wildlife and prairie ecosystem, and watch the 20-minute introductory film, "Land of Stone and Light," in the theater.

The summer months are when a majority of the ranger-led programs take place and are when the Fossil Prep Lab—where visitors can watch as paleontologists work with fossils—is open. Other popular activities include wildlife viewing, driving tours, nature walks and night-sky programs.

For more information, visit nps.gov/badl or call +1.605.433-5361. —P.H.



GEORGIA QUEEN

Long live the Georgia Queen

Savannah Riverboat Cruises recently celebrated its 25th anniversary and added another ship to its fleet, the *Georgia Queen*. The largest riverboat of its kind in the United States, the vessel was once a luxury floating casino on the Mississippi River. It received a \$4 million makeover and traveled 2,800 miles to its new home port in southeastern Georgia.

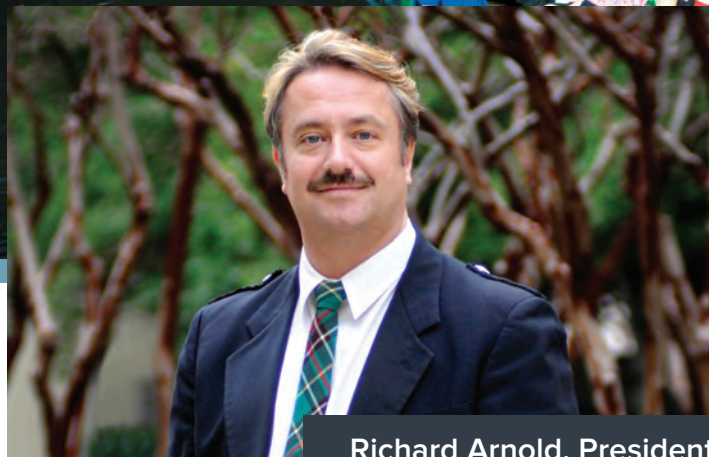
At 230 feet long and 68 feet tall, the *Georgia Queen* has a 5,000 square-foot open-air top deck and three grand ballrooms that each accommodate up to 250 guests. The ship features a full-service gourmet kitchen, allowing for extended menus on themed meal cruises.

The 1,000-passenger boat is one of the company's two vessels that are used for sightseeing cruises. Groups can hop on board for lunch and dinner harbor tours, sunset excursions or holiday-themed cruises.

"Until you've (seen) a city from the water, you haven't really (seen) the city, and it's such a different perspective seeing Savannah aboard the ship," says Jonathan Claughton, the company's president and CEO. "We love our motorcoach groups and tour groups in Savannah. We hope to see them aboard the new *Georgia Queen*."

To find out more, go to savannahriverboat.com or call +1.912.232.6404. —K.F. 📍

"I OFTEN FEEL UNDERWHELMED BY
CERTAIN DESTINATIONS. BUT
Oklahoma City
FAR EXCEEDED MY EXPECTATIONS."



Richard Arnold, President & "Director of Fun,"
Atlantic Tours & Travel

OKC-ing is believing.

From whatever direction your tour approaches OKC, you'll find the intersection of I-44, I-40, I-35 and Route 66 is a modern metropolis with loads of group-friendly attractions like the Bricktown Canal, the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum and the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. If OKC isn't already on your list, it's time to stop and OKC what you've been missing.

Terrains of faith

BY BOB ROUSE

Members of NTA and the Faith Travel Association not only put travelers in touch with their religious roots, they also reveal the places and faces of different religions and diverse cultures. Diversity extends to the many terrains of faith travel, too, from the mountains of Tennessee to a river in South Asia.

Here are five types of terrains where people of faith can discover spiritual settings that offer awe and inspiration.

Sicilian hiking trails

“Religious people are in search of unique moments to connect with God and their friends,” says Aldo Caronia of Michelangelo International Travel. “We want to customize the most extraordinary experience for each group.”

The company is creating pilgrimage tours and faith-based vacations to allow travelers to explore Italy’s sacred sites, along with other cultural aspects of the country. Aiming for the 2018 season, Michelangelo is enhancing its Divino programs with popular culinary components and outdoor experiences.

“Our faith-based itineraries will feature hiking and biking activities that take pilgrims to remote churches or sites where they will be able to celebrate Mass or pray, surrounded by the

beauty of nature,” Caronia says. “We’ll also organize fun culinary activities, like cooking classes, a truffle hunt, grape stomping or a nice wine tasting.”

One of the programs that will offer spiritual discovery amid Italian flavors and vistas is a 10-day tour in eastern Sicily. Visitors will hike to extraordinary churches on the Aeolian islands of Lipari and Salina and around the Sicilian town of Taormina. The tour will also include a walk to Savoca (the filming location of the “Godfather” movies), an excursion to Mount Etna and a visit to Taormina’s most famous landmark, the Greek Theater.

To learn more, contact Caronia at aldo.caronia@michelangelo.travel or visit michelangelo.travel/us.



Madonna del Terzito Sanctuary, Italy

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/J-ELLE: bit.ly/2XK108

Madonna della Rocca Sanctuary, Italy



CC FLICKR/HARVEY BARRISON: bit.ly/2mXbtK7

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touched so many.



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PRAISE YOUR WORKS TO
ANOTHER, AND SHALL
DECLARE YOUR MIGHTY ACTS."
—Psalm 145:4, NKJV



Billy Graham preaching in Times Square, New York, 1957



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Terrains of faith



Ganges River, Varanasi, India

Holy waters

The Indian city of Varanasi is one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world; it also is one of the holiest of the seven sacred cities in Hinduism.

“Called the spiritual capital of India, the magnificent city of Varanasi radiates endless energy,” says Yvonne Trudeau of Worldwide Adventures India. “A single dip in the holy waters of the Ganges can wash away a lifetime of sins, and a boat ride across the sacred river perfectly captures the spirit of Varanasi. And you’ll see candlelit paper boats with flowers that carry people’s prayers across the waters.”

Faith travelers who visit Varanasi also meditate and pray along the ghats (steps leading to the water’s edge), and they can go to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple, one of the most important places of worship in the country. Near Varanasi is the 1,500-year-old Mahabodhi Temple, which marks the spot of the legendary Bodhi tree, under which Buddha meditated and attained enlightenment.

“A journey here is an intensely spiritual experience, complete with meditation sessions and spiritual processes,” Trudeau says.

For more about Varanasi and other spiritual journeys, visit worldwideadventuresasia.com or contact Trudeau at ytrudeau@worldwideadventuresindia.com.



Paper boats carry prayers in the Ganges.

WORLDWIDE ADVENTURES

An island abbey

On the west coast of Scotland is the serene Isle of Iona, home to one of the oldest sacred sites in Europe. Iona Abbey was founded in A.D. 563 by St. Columba and 12 Irish followers and became an influential center of Christianity among the Scots. St. Martin’s Cross, which dates to the eighth century, still stands outside the abbey.

“Iona retains its spiritual atmosphere and is a popular site for Christian pilgrimage and worship,” says Maggie Anderson of VisitScotland. “There’s an organized walk around the island every Tuesday, with stops at places of historical and religious significance.”

The abbey church was restored at the beginning of the 20th century, and work on the living quarters began in 1938, which marks the beginning of the Iona Community. This ecumenical group founded by Rev. George MacLeod embraces Christians from different traditions and walks of life.

In 2013, marking the 1,450th anniversary of Columba’s arrival, the island’s ancient carved stones were placed on



Iona Abbey, Scotland

VISITSCOTLAND

display in the Abbey Museum. Visitors can also learn from interpretive panels and an audio guide.

For more information, email Anderson at maggie.anderson@visitscotland.com or go to visitscotland.com.



Saint John Paul II National Shrine;
Washington, D.C.

A capital city

People of faith often embark on a pilgrimage to shrines and sacred places so they might pray and draw closer to their God. And for Kerin Buntin, the founder of FTA-member Peace Love Pilgrimage, prayer is the primary focus; the destination is secondary.

"A pilgrimage is an investment in your faith," Buntin says. "Free of distraction, pilgrims give their hearts to God for a special purpose, and unexpected spiritual graces explode from the journey."

The Carmel, Indiana, travel company's programs highlight Catholic spirituality in both international and domestic settings, including a trip to Washington D.C. tailored for Catholic school eighth-grade students.

"The D.C. tour is inspired by the late Saint Pope John Paul II," Buntin says. "While cultural exhibits abound there, the Saint John Paul II National Shrine is an invitation for pilgrims to grow in Christian discipleship. His remarkable life and teachings bring a spiritual element to a cultural tour."

The shrine holds a daily Mass, and a John Paul II exhibit includes personal artifacts, texts, images and interactive displays that educate visitors on his 25-year pontificate.

The three-day program also includes a guided walk at The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and a prayerful visit to Arlington National Cemetery. All of Peace Love Pilgrimage's tours include a daily service led by a Catholic priest accompanying the group.

For more information, visit peacelovepilgrimage.com or contact Buntin at info@peacelovepilgrimage.com.

Spirit-filled Smokies

A motorcoach heading to the mountains of Tennessee can get loud—in a good way—says Jerry Varner of Making Memories Tours in Washburn, Missouri.

"When we take groups to the National Quartet Convention in Pigeon Forge, they really bond along the way," he says. "There's lots of singing on the bus."

The weeklong event, set for Sept. 24–30 this year, attracts gospel music's top names and their fans, according to Joy McNealy, Pigeon Forge Department of Tourism.

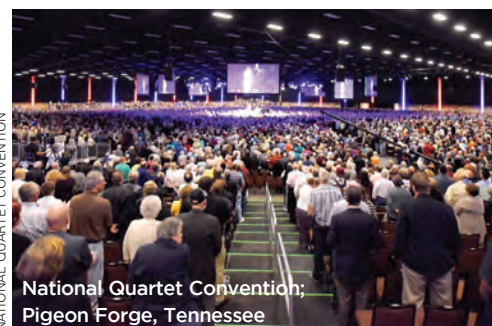
"Most tour groups stay about three days—with two evenings of concerts—and some stay for the entire event," McNealy says. "During the day they explore Pigeon Forge's dining, shopping and attractions; visit Dollywood; or schedule a mountain tour with a step-on guide into the national park."

"It's a different themed trip for us, and a lot of fun," Varner says. "We do all the ground logistics and advertise on Southern gospel radio stations."

2017 marks the 60th year of the event, and McNealy is grateful for the visitors.

"What a joyous time to see hundreds of coaches and church buses in Pigeon Forge that one week in September. Our town comes alive with the sound of gospel music everywhere."

For more information about the annual event in Pigeon Forge, visit mypigeonforge.com or email McNealy at jmcnealy@cityofpigeonforge.com.



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National Quartet Convention;
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JUNE



FEATURE: North American National Parks

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

GUIDE: Receptive Services

JULY



FEATURE: Preview to Travel Exchange
San Antonio

DESTINATIONS: South Central U.S. (*Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia*), Pacific Northwest (*British Columbia, Oregon, Washington*), Germany & Switzerland, India

CITY SPOTLIGHT: Louisville, KY

GUIDE: Shopping

AUG./SEPT.



FEATURE: Museums

DESTINATIONS: Coastal California (*Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco*), Great Lakes (*Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin*), Southwest (*Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas*), Eastern Europe (*Croatia, Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia*)

CITY SPOTLIGHT: Denver

GUIDE: Museums

THE SHOW-ME STATE DELIVERS

travel
exchange '17

No one knows for sure the origins of Missouri's unofficial nickname, the "Show-me State." According to the Missouri Secretary of State's website, the most frequently cited coining comes from Congressman Willard Duncan Vandiver. During a speech in 1899, he declared, "Frothy eloquence neither convinces nor satisfies me. I am from Missouri. You have got to show me."

It's fitting, then, that St. Louis hosted Travel Exchange '17, Feb. 26–March 2. Your business is driven by tangible solutions, and what is a better foundation for concrete results than an event with a full schedule of appointments, education and networking?

On the following pages, you'll find pictures and quotes from delegates at NTA's convention in St. Louis. We could tell you all about the productive meetings and fun, but we'll minimize the frothy eloquence—we'll *show you*.



“It was another successful year of NTA's Travel Exchange. I enjoyed networking with new members, learning in educational seminars and having fun in the evening. I'm looking forward to the next one in San Antonio!”

—ELSA LO, CHINA SILK TOURS

“Travel Exchange is always a great opportunity to connect with customers, some we have been working with for 30 years. I especially enjoy the relaxed atmosphere of the social functions, where business relationships become friendships.”

—DREW SCHMIDT,
SAN JUAN CRUISES



“For my first NTA experience, I loved it from the very minute I walked into the show and was welcomed with open arms and lots of hand shaking. It was great to volunteer, as this was very helpful in meeting people. And I loved the first-timer's dinner—great way to get a group of newbies to visit and share!”

—CAMIE LUPINACCI,
SURFTIDES BEACH RESORT

Delegates get down to business

Tour operators met with supplier and DMO members for business appointments scheduled across four days.

“Although this is the first year the City of Staunton has participated in NTA, we’re already seeing results. Less than a week after Travel Exchange ‘17, we were contacted by a tour operator looking for a new hotel property in our area. If it weren’t for these quality appointments, we wouldn’t have been able to build the foundation that will lead to long-lasting partnerships.”

—KATIE CAMPBELL,
STAUNTON CVB (LEFT)

“I had more appointments this year than I have ever had. Tucson picked up over 18 potential tours or tour series, including seven from operators who have never brought groups to our destination before.”

—BROOKE HAMLETT, VISIT TUCSON



“Something I appreciate about NTA is the appointments, which, rather than just being a 10-minute business deal, are often the start to a valuable relationship. At St. Louis this year, I came away with dozens of great leads to share with my partner businesses back home.”

—DANIEL SCHWARTZ,
SAN FRANCISCO TRAVEL
(RIGHT, PICTURED WITH TOURISM CARES
STUDENT RACHEL WILSON)

“Through a joint partnership with the Cooperstown/Otsego County Tourism, the Hall of Fame had 51 appointments during the show, 10 of which were new contacts.”

—JUNE DOLHUN,
NATIONAL BASEBALL
HALL OF FAME & MUSEUM

“I loved the variety of tour operators that were in attendance this year. We were able to meet with several operators, including international inbound, that were very interested in Lubbock, Texas.”

—AMY ZIENTEK, VISIT LUBBOCK



“ Travel Exchange in St. Louis gave me the opportunity to meet with a great variety of operators; some that I’ve been working with for a while and some that are completely new to Scotland. I even had some incredibly inspiring meetings with traditionally domestic-focused U.S. operators, who are now looking to introduce Scotland as their first-ever international destination. How exciting! ”

—MAGGIE ANDERSON, VISITSCOTLAND



“ The caliber of my appointments this year was phenomenal. I felt there was so many more new companies at Travel Exchange this year, which is great! I absolutely love getting to know new operators, especially if they are coming my way to Jackson Hole. ”

—MAGGIE DAVIS, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WILDLIFE ART OF THE UNITED STATES



“We had a wonderful opportunity to meet with our current suppliers and discuss upcoming tours. We also made great connections with DMOs and brainstormed new and unique ideas.”

—BREE POPOV, GOOD TIMES TRAVEL (RIGHT, PICTURED WITH HER CO-WORKER BRIDGET AMBROSE)



“It’s always a great feeling being able to spark an idea or an interest in the buyers you meet with during appointments. This year there seemed to be lots of willingness to learn about new ideas and try something on a tour that they haven’t necessarily done before.”

—MELISSA MCCLURE, VISIT FAIRFAX (LEFT)



“ Belle Meade Plantation continues to look to NTA for quality appointments, and St. Louis did not disappoint. Rare is the convention that matches such a high quality of tour company or tour operator with hospitality industry professionals who are ready for business. ”

—MARK JAMES, BELLE MEADE PLANTATION

Knowledge and experience merge at educational sessions

Industry leaders, marketing experts and your NTA peers led seminars and panel discussions aimed at improving your business.



“Being new to NTA, [I thought] the Travel Exchange 101 education session was great. I learned some invaluable tips on how to get the most out of all the events during the week. The speakers were entertaining and insightful!”

—TIFFANY KENNEDY, VISIT LUBBOCK

“The insights and advice shared by the diverse women on the Women in Travel panel highlighted the strong sense of community within NTA. As a first-time attendee, I found the session to be a great opportunity to connect with other women in the travel industry.”

—ALISON LINDSAY, BUTCHART GARDENS



“I enjoyed the educational sessions focused on video marketing that were lead by Meaghan Corson. Meaghan brought some real-life experiences and some great tips that would help us to present our best side on camera. She gave us the opportunity to practice and had some great data to support the growth of video marketing and why we should be doing it.”

—SAVILE LORD, THE SPAM MUSEUM



“Tourism Cares worked hard and played hard at TREX '17. The charitable community of the travel industry helped 15 academic scholarship winners kick off their careers by pairing them with 31 industry pros for mentoring. We also hosted two panel discussions and the annual Tourism Rocks dance party.”

—MIKE REA, TOURISM CARES



“The Nancy Friedman session on cold-calling was excellent. I immediately changed my voicemail message thanks to the tips she gave.”

—BROOKE HAMLETT, VISIT TUCSON



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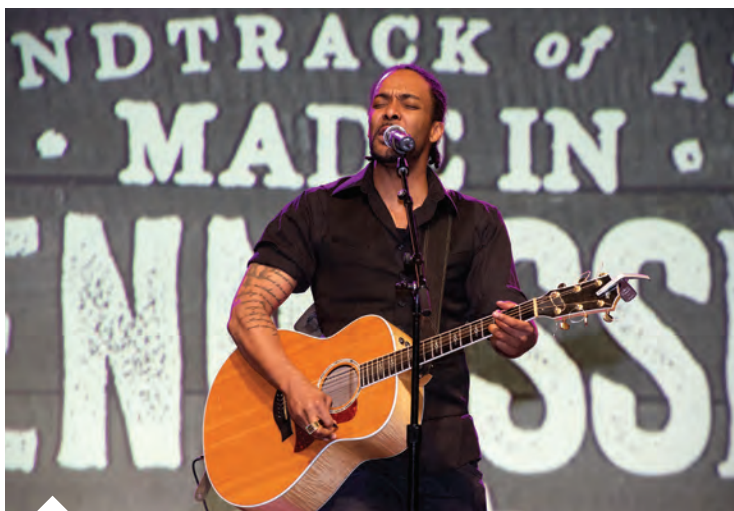
Travel Exchange meals serve up top-notch entertainment

Travel Exchange delegates got more than a meal at sponsored breakfasts and luncheons. The convention included three breakfasts with keynote speakers and daily lunches featuring a variety of performances.



"Networking doesn't only happen during the meetings at NTA; the luncheons and evening events are a great opportunity to speak to even more NTA members. I was blown away by the luncheon sponsored by Broadway Inbound [and NYC & Company], which was top-class entertainment."

—MAGGIE ANDERSON, VISITSCOTLAND

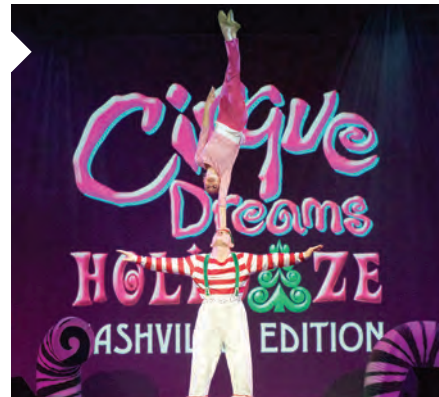


Country singer Damien Horne performed at Tuesday's luncheon, sponsored by the Soundtrack of America: Made in Tennessee.



Donald Leadbetter, the national tourism program manager for the U.S. National Park Service, addressed delegates at Wednesday morning's Government Relations Breakfast Bistro.

The Gaylord Opryland Resort in Nashville, Tennessee, brought the holiday spirit to Travel Exchange with "Cirque Dreams Holidayze" at Thursday's luncheon.



Blazing Boots, a pop-country revue featured on Norwegian Cruise Line voyages, danced at Wednesday's luncheon. The company also gave away an Alaskan cruise and land tour package.



Aziz Abu Sarah, co-owner and CEO of MEJDI Tours, spoke at the FTA-member Breakfast and Networking session.



Delegates see the best of St. Louis at evening events

After the convention floor closed for the day, delegates continued making new connections at nighttime social events. The City Museum, Ballpark Village, the Hard Rock Cafe and Anheuser-Busch brewery hosted parties, and two nights of Dine-around events offered NTA members a taste of St. Louis' local cuisine.



“ St. Louis knocked it out of the park at TREX '17. Every event was fantastic! Great food, great venues and great opportunities to mingle with friends and colleagues! ”

—LAURIE LINCOLN, MAIN STREET TOURS



“ I love that, as attendees, we are able to truly immerse ourselves in the host city. My favorite event in St. Louis was at the City Museum, where we explored a repurposed building. (It was) something I never would have known about otherwise, and it ended up being something I would definitely make a return visit to. ”

—KAITLYN DUNNEBACK,
WITTE TRAVEL & TOURS



“ All of the evening functions were outstanding, but my favorite was touring the Cardinals Hall of Fame at Ballpark Village and having the opportunity to try on the 2006 and 2011 World Series rings. What an experience! ”

—JUNE DOLHUN, NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME & MUSEUM



“ The events in St. Louis were quite spectacular and not soon forgotten, from the tunnels and caves of the City Museum—where you are literally as young as you feel—to the ballpark and the history that surrounds it. Also, who can forget about the massive clydesdale experience? Everyone loves to see works of art, and the majestic horses are no exception. ”

—JASON SMITH, SCENIC SAFARIS



“ The event at Ballpark Village was awesome! From the food to the '80s band to the photo booth, it was a home run in my book. ”

—KATIE KNUTSON, MITCHELL CVB



“ Getting to go somewhere as unexpected as the City Museum was amazing. I had no idea that a place like this even existed. It challenged myself and the colleagues I was with in the most fun way, as we kept on asking ‘Should we crawl through this?’ or ‘Do we step on that?’ ”

—MELISSA MCCLURE, VISIT FAIRFAX



NTA recognizes member excellence

During the event, the association honored the outstanding industry contributions of individuals and organizations in the areas of professionalism, government advocacy and volunteer leadership.



Terry MacRae (center), founder and CEO of Hornblower Events & Cruises, was presented with the NTA Pioneer Award by Justin Osbon, outgoing NTA board chair, and Pam Inman, NTA president.



Heather Anderson of Travel Portland (left) and Lisa Itel of Travel Oregon accepted the Shining Star Award on behalf of their DMOs. The award recognizes organizations for their support of NTA and its mission.



Patti Culp (right), executive director of the Alabama Travel Council, was named Volunteer of the Year for her decades of service to the association in leadership roles and government relations programs.



Paul Nakamoto (center), vice president of Gray Line of San Francisco, received the Bob Everidge Lifetime Achievement Award from Justin Osbon and Pam Inman.



Courier brought its Distinguished Dozen gold winners on stage during Tuesday's luncheon. From left: Lisa Itel, Travel Oregon; Heather Anderson, Travel Portland; Janice Weinman and Maya Tamim, Hilton Worldwide; Joe Luffman, Gaylord Opryland Hotel & Resort; Liz Gilbert, Entertainment Cruises; Peter Waugh, Broadway Inbound/The Shubert Organization; Pam Inman; Roxana Rivera, Newseum; Steve Olender, Mohegan Sun; Tara Hippensteel, Hard Rock International; Stephen Braun, Macy's; Jodi Danyluk, Norwegian Cruise Line; Malia Asfour, Jordan Tourism Board; Bob Rouse, editor, *Courier*; Kami Risk, president, NTA Services.



The association recognized its inaugural Top Five Young Professionals. They are (from left) Dave Nitkiewicz, Experience Grand Rapids; Michelle Tupman, Great Canadian Holiday; Lisa Itel, Travel Oregon; LouAnna Henton, Nashville CVB; Fraser Neave, Wells Gray Tours.



Thomas E. Jaffa (center), was presented the James D. Santini Award for his role in NTA's government relations efforts. With him are former Santini Award winners Neil Amrine, Patti Culp and Mark Hoffmann, along with Pam Inman. 📸

History-rich Boston remains timeless ... and timely

BY PAT HENDERSON

“Boston visitors encounter a thriving modern city, truly one of the most beautiful and oldest cities in America. Once you walk the streets of Beacon Hill, South End or Cambridge, you will fall in love. You’ll want to visit the nation’s oldest ballpark; cruise, sail or paddle the harbor or river; sample the astounding variety of seafood, craft beer and spirits being produced in New England; and choose from a dizzying array of museums, attractions and walking tours.”

—Stacy Thornton, senior manager, tourism sales for the Greater Boston CVB

For more information, contact Stacy Thornton of the Greater Boston CVB at sthornton@bostonusa.com or visit bostonusa.com.

New tours of the old city

Thornton says one of the best ways to experience her city’s rich culture is through themed sightseeing tours. She recommends checking out the following new tours that provide a fresh look at different aspects of Boston history:

The Freedom Trail Foundation has developed a new group program, the **Revolutionary Women Tour**. This 90-minute guided walk focuses on four centuries of women who, through their own struggles for freedom and equality, helped change history.



FREEDOM TRAIL FOUNDATION

The Revolutionary Women Tour

Launched in 2016, **Boston Crime Tours** offers a look at the life and times of infamous local mobster James “Whitey” Bulger, as well as some of the city’s other notorious characters. Both walking and bus tours are available.

The unique **Mobsters and Lobsters Trolley Tour** also details Boston’s storied and sinister past. Groups visit notorious neighborhoods, mobster hideaways and sites of historical heists before sitting down for a lobster dinner. An optional 45-minute wine tasting can be added.

Performing arts options abound

“One of our best-kept secrets” is the phrase Thornton uses to describe Boston’s dazzling performing arts scene. The NTA membership includes four tour suppliers—the Boston Ballet, the Boston Pops Orchestra/Boston Symphony Orchestra/Tanglewood, Blue Man Group and Shear Madness—that regularly entertain audiences at their show venues across the city. The organizations’ member contacts passed along these details regarding beyond-the-show options:

Boston Ballet

NTA contact: John Fernandes | bostonballet.org

In addition to offering group discounts on performances, Boston Ballet provides behind-the-scenes opportunities for groups that aren’t available to the general public, ranging from backstage tours to meet-and-greets with dancers and workshops.

Boston Pops Orchestra/Boston Symphony Orchestra/Tanglewood

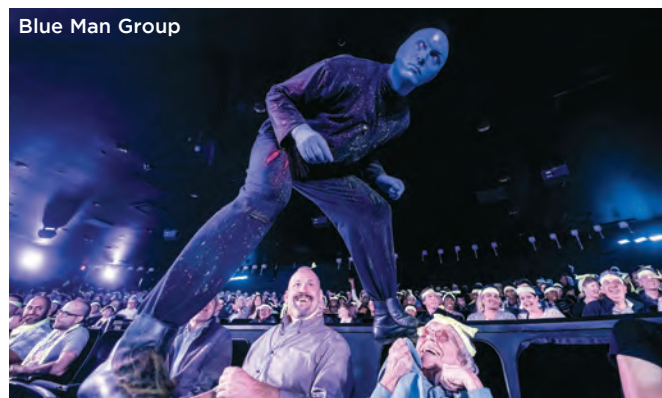
Megan Cokely | bso.org

Groups can interact with performers through the “Working With the Masters” program or as part of master classes, during which participants are coached by a musician on stage. Educational workshops and private tours of Symphony Hall also are popular options.



Boston Ballet

JRDN PHOTOGRAPHY



Blue Man Group

LINDSEY BEST

Blue Man Group

Krissy Beal | blueman.com

Ever wanted to meet a Blue Man? That is just one of the things that can be paired with taking in a show at the Charles Playhouse. Question-and-answer sessions with the Blue Men, the show’s band or a stage manager help audiences get an inside look.

Shear Madness

Lisa Field | shearmadness.com

Beyond solving the crime during a performance of this long-running whodunit, groups can take part in meet-and-greet sessions with cast members. Beyond-the-stage talkback programs also are available following certain performances.

Of Kennedys and coral reefs

Two of the defining aspects of Boston’s culture are its rich nautical history and its deep roots in American history. Groups can find out more about both during visits to these NTA-member attractions:

Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the U.S. Senate

The institute, which opened in 2015, encourages people to be more than bystanders in the political process and helps them experience democracy firsthand through interactive exhibits and programs covering public policy. Groups also can take part in daily programs in the attraction’s full-size U.S. Senate chamber replica. emkinstitute.org

The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of JFK, and the museum has a number of special programs and events in store for the centennial celebration. “JFK at 100: Milestones and Mementos,” which opens May 8 and will be on display through the end of 2017, commemorates President Kennedy’s centenary. jfklibrary.org




The Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the U.S. Senate

EDWARD M. KENNEDY INSTITUTE

The New England Aquarium

This state-of-the-art attraction is home to 27,000 animals and more than 70 exhibits representing unique habitats from across the globe. Groups can see the revitalized 200,000-gallon Caribbean Coral Reef exhibit, visit the marine mammal center, and enjoy the largest shark and ray touch tank on the East Coast. neaq.org

Thornton says two other popular attractions are the MIT Museum and the Paul S. Russell, MD, Museum of Medical History and Innovation at Massachusetts General Hospital. The city will welcome a satellite location of the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston in 2018. 



JEFF QUIRE

Peak (and peek) park experiences: Mount Magazine State Park and the surrounding Ozark National Forest showcase Arkansas' natural beauty at its finest. The park is a popular destination for outdoor recreational adventure, which ranges from hiking and horseback riding to hang gliding and rock climbing. Turn to page 40 to learn more about product options in Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas.

Midwest U.S.	38
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Africa	45

Midwest U.S.

COMPILED BY KENDALL FLETCHER

Snowfall in love with Iowa

Known mostly for prosperous cornfields and rolling plains, Iowa is trending as a major wintertime destination with lots of events, activities and some beautiful scenery to boot. Two popular spots are Des Moines and Dubuque.

Go skiing

Travelers can hit the slopes at Sundown Mountain Resort in Dubuque, where 85 acres of cedar forest await. Seven Oaks Recreation in the Des Moines River Valley offers tubing, skiing, snowboarding and a lodge with cozy amenities.

Or, more uniquely, go snowshoeing

Visitors can dust off their snowshoes (or buy their first-ever pair) and cover the Mines of Spain and Swiss Valley Nature Preserve in Dubuque.

Go ice skating

Indoor ice skating is available at Dubuque's Mystique Community Ice Center, or outside at Allison Henderson Park. Brenton Skating Plaza in Des Moines boasts an outdoor rink, perfect for skating beneath the stars.

Wear your regular footwear and go exploring

The historic mining and milling towns along the 26-mile-long Heritage Trail from Dyersville to Dubuque is the perfect way to cover lots of ground while learning state history and enjoying the peacefulness of winter. The trail, popular for hiking and biking, can be traveled by snowmobile in the winter.



Ice skating at Des Moines' Brenton Skating Plaza

DMCITYVIEW.COM

Don't forget to eat

Wood-fired pizza sounds perfect when it's cold out, right? Travelers can hit up L. May Eatery in Dubuque, or Gusto Pizza Co. in Des Moines. And there are plenty more unique restaurants in the cities to choose from.

For more information on wintertime activities in Iowa, visit traveldubuque.com and catchdesmoines.com.

Total eclipse of the heartland

There's no place like Kansas to watch the first total solar eclipse since 1979.

The northeast part of the Sunflower State is in the direct path of the impressive and rare occurrence, and several organizations and institutions are putting together events to watch and celebrate it on Aug. 21. Kelli Hilliard, travel development manager with Travel Kansas, says the hype of the solar eclipse began a couple years ago when tour operators began contacting her about bringing groups to see it.



ISTOCK

"We're really mostly excited for the fact that it's going to bring a lot of people to the state," she says. "It's just such a cool event."

Kansas will host special speakers at Benedictine College in Atchison, including Fr. Christopher J. Corbally, S.J., president of the National Committee for Astronomy in the Vatican City State for the International Astronomical Union, and Fr. Paul Gabor, S.J., vice director of the Vatican Observatory Research Group. They will offer lectures on the eclipse, astronomy and the church.

Atchison County will have watch parties at Benedictine College's football field, the Mount St. Scholastica Convent and the Amelia Earhart Airport.

Doniphan County will have Kansas' longest exposure time during the eclipse, and viewing sites will include Courthouse Square, the 4-H Fairgrounds, and the Troy High School softball/baseball diamond and football field. Ancillary activities at the different sites will include walking tours, live music, food vendors and a street dance.

There will also be events hosted in Brown, Leavenworth and Nemaha counties.

Visit travelks.com/solareclipse for developing information or contact Hilliard at kelli.hilliard@ks.gov.

Japanese Ambience Festival



LAURITZEN GARDENS

Konnichiwa, Nebraska!

Visiting Omaha, Nebraska, in the autumn means celebrating longtime amity with its first-ever sister city during the Japanese Ambience Festival.

"The event highlights the international friendship of Omaha and its sister city, Shizuoka," says Deborah Ward, vice president of marketing and communications with Visit Omaha. "It also highlights the diversity of our city, as well as the beauty of Japanese culture."

This year's festival, which takes place Oct. 7-8 at Lauritzen Gardens, will include a chrysanthemum show, ikebana demonstrations (the Japanese art of flower arrangement), bonsai displays and guided garden walking tours, which connect festival-goers to the importance of the natural world.

Additional activities at past festivals have included calligraphy, koinobori (carp-streamer kites), taiko drumming, koto music, martial arts, displays of Hinamatsuri (Japanese dolls) and Kyudo demonstrations (Japanese archery). Local clubs and students have also performed traditional Japanese folk dancing, given fashion presentations and offered demonstrations of Go, the national game of Japan. Visitors can take part in the activities, all true to Japanese cultural practices.

For more information, contact Ward at dward@visitomaha.com or see visitomaha.com.

Get your brew on in Kansas City

What do barbecue, jazz music and craft beer have in common? They're all calling cards of Kansas City, Missouri.

Thanks to the Kansas City Tap Tour, groups can get their fill of the latter. Travelers can purchase a \$5 guidebook with a list of the 11 participating breweries, location and hours for each, exclusive discounts offered, and suggested beers.

After collecting at least 5 stamps, beer-lovers can head to the Visit Kansas City center to claim an exclusive Kansas City Tap Tour-branded bottle opener. If they sample all 11, they can claim a limited-edition Tap Tour t-shirt.

Transportation for the tour is available through Barley Bus.

For more information, see visitkc.com or contact Kelli Freeman with Kansas City Group Tourism Bureau at kfreeman@kcgta.com. ☎



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Erin@TravelWaterloo.com

West South Central U.S. COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

A Sooner State six pack

"There are many things that make Oklahoma a great place for group travel, but I think what really stands out is the diversity of the experiences people can have here," says Todd Stallbaumer, consumer and trade marketing director for the Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation Department. "Groups can get a taste of our growing urban areas and our charming small towns, and they can immerse themselves in our Native American and Western cultures at fascinating museums and cultural events, and get some fresh air at our gorgeous parks."

He highlights the following six attractions across the state:



Museum of the Red River



RiverSport Rapids Whitewater Rafting & Kayaking Center



Washita Battlefield National Historic Site

The Museum of the Red River

The museum in Idabel focuses on art, archaeology and Native American culture, and it is home to the first cast mold of Oklahoma's state dinosaur, *Acrocanthosaurus*. Visitors can see more than 30,000 objects from six continents, and more items will be on display when expanded gallery spaces open this summer.

The Pioneer Woman Mercantile

In late 2016, Food Network star Ree Drummond opened her much-anticipated bakery, deli and general store in Pawhuska. The deli menu is filled with tasty comfort—think chicken fried steak and pork chops—and the store offers Pioneer Woman merchandise and other unique products.

RiverSport Rapids Whitewater Rafting & Kayaking Center

Visitors can raft, tube or kayak in the heart of Oklahoma City at one of the world's largest rafting facilities. RiverSport Rapids is part of the city's Boathouse District, a waterfront area that also includes a six-story adventure course and zip lining.

Sea Turtle Island at Oklahoma Aquarium

This March, the Oklahoma Aquarium in Jenks debuted Sea Turtle Island, a 56,000-gallon tank that is home to loggerhead sea turtles, reef sharks and tropical fish. The attraction also has an area where visitors can feed and pet stingrays, and a walk-through tunnel offering close-up views of bull sharks.

The U.S. Army Field Artillery Museum

Located in Fort Sill, the museum is dedicated to collecting, preserving and interpreting the history of U.S. Army artillery. Exhibits feature military treasures dating from 1775 to the present, including the rare Atomic Annie, a Cold War-era prototype that is the only cannon to ever fire a nuclear shell.

Washita Battlefield National Historic Site

This site in Cheyenne is where Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer's men staged a surprise attack on a Cheyenne encampment led by Peace Chief Black Kettle. Groups can learn about the events leading up to the battle and the aftermath, view artifacts and photos, and take a self-guided tour of the battlefield.

For more information, reach out to Stallbaumer at todd@travelok.com or go to travelok.com.



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Ready to 'saur' in Houston

The Houston Museum of Natural Science provides visitors with a full-force science education. The attraction, which opened in 1909, has large dinosaur and fossil exhibits, a planetarium, a butterfly garden, a 394-seat IMAX theater and traveling exhibit spaces.

According to Chris Arreaga, corporate/group sales manager, the museum is a popular spot for school groups.

"Tour operators are looking to bring their students to a place where they will not only have fun but can also learn something new," says Arreaga. "Here, students can find out about the life cycles of butterflies, how diamonds are formed and where they are found, why the Egyptians mummified their dead, and how dinosaurs stalked and caught their prey."

There are a variety of hands-on exhibits throughout the attraction's Cabinet of Curiosities and the new Welch Hall of Chemistry. The 30,000-square-foot Wiess Energy Hall, which

will open by summer, will add another permanent exhibition that offers interactive educational components.

"Student groups can learn and have fun while comparing the viscosity of various oil samples from around the world, pick up and hold fossils and rare artifacts, or test their skills in electronically 'changing' the arrangements of atoms in molecules, which results in completely different chemical properties," says Arreaga.

For adult groups, he recommends booking a tour with one of the museum's well-trained Discovery Guides, staff members who take visitors through the exhibits and offer in-depth commentary.

"Our Discovery Guides bring the artifacts and fossils to life," adds Arreaga. "They re-create for our groups the history, life and environment of how these objects came to be."

Contact Arreaga at carreaga@hmns.org or visit hmns.org.



SAN ANTONIO CVB

Set your sights on San Antonio

NTA is bringing the second edition of Travel Exchange '17 to San Antonio from Dec. 14 to 18. The popular southern Texas destination has plenty in store for members, and you can read more about our upcoming host city in the July issue of *Courier*. And don't forget: If you attended Travel Exchange in St. Louis, you can save 50 percent off your registration for San Antonio if you sign up by July 14 at NTAonline.com/convention.

Eureka Springs bubbles over with arts options

Eureka Springs, Arkansas, is home to roughly 350 working artists. While that number may not seem very high, consider that town's population is just under 2,100 residents, so one in six is an active artist.

"Many of our galleries are willing to put on specific programs for groups, which can include meet-the-artist events with wine tastings, make-and-take activities and private

gallery strolls for visiting groups," says Karen Pryor, director of sales for the Eureka Springs City Advertising & Promotion Commission. "We also can create programs based on special interests, such as one we did highlighting the work of E. Fay Jones, an Arkansas artist who designed [Eureka Springs'] Thorncrown Chapel."

She says one of the best times to visit is during the May Festival of the Arts, which will celebrate its 30th anniversary this year. This month-long event is packed with one-of-a-kind art exhibits and demonstrations, gallery walks, the ARTrageous Parade, musical performances and culinary arts, as well as the White Street Walk, a festive street party thrown by the artists.

Two performance-based cultural options Pryor highlights are Drumming in the Park and Opera in the Ozarks. Held the first Saturday of each month, Drumming in the Park features West African rhythms and dancing and, of course, participatory drumming. Opera in the Ozarks brings together young singers from across the U.S. who study, train and then perform famous works. This year, which marks the 67th season, "The Marriage of Figaro," "Susannah" and "Carmen" will be staged by the budding stars between June 23 and July 21.

For more information, email Pryor at karen@eurekasprings.org or visit eurekasprings.org.



EUREKA SPRINGS CITY ADVERTISING & PROMOTION COMMISSION

A large advertisement for Arkansas featuring a black and white photo of Bill Clinton. The text "A LEGACY Naturally Made" is prominently displayed. Below it, a box contains the text: "EXPERIENCE THE IMPACT OF ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL POLITICAL COUPLES — WHO MADE THEIR LEGACY RIGHT HERE IN THE NATURAL STATE. PLAN YOUR TOUR AT ARKANSASGROUPTRAVEL.COM OR BY CALLING 1-800-872-1259. WHAT WILL YOU MAKE IN ARKANSAS?". To the right, there is a circular logo for "BILL CLINTON '92 '92 PRESIDENT" and a photo of Bill and Hillary Clinton. At the bottom right, the Arkansas state logo "ARKANSAS THE NATURAL STATE" is shown next to a photo of the Oval Office.



A LEGACY
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BILL CLINTON
'92 '92
PRESIDENT
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Is it Arkansas or Parkansas?

The NTA membership includes the following three Arkansas parks, where travelers can get active and enjoy the Natural State's natural beauty:



DeGray Lake Resort State Park Bismarck

Arkansas's only resort state park, DeGray is located near Bismarck in the foothills of the Ouachita Mountains. Visitors can go kayaking or boating, and enjoy fishing in secluded coves along its namesake 13,800-acre lake. The area also is rich in birdlife and wildlife, which are protected within the park.

Visit degray.com or contact Linda Hodges at linda.hodges@arkansas.gov.



The Lodge at Mount Magazine/ Mt. Magazine State Park

Paris

Home to the state's tallest mountain, 2,753-foot Mount Magazine, the park offers hiking trails, rock climbing, hang gliding, ATV rides and other outdoor adventures. The rustic lodge includes 60 rooms, the Skycrest Restaurant and a conference center.

Visit mountmagazinestatepark.com or contact Heidi Ryan at heidi.ryan@arkansas.gov.



Ozark Folk Center State Park Mountain View

This park's mission is to preserve and share Ozark crafts, music and heritage in an entertaining way. Guests can take part in local traditions during blacksmithing and pottery-making demonstrations, dulcimer lessons, herb gardening seminars, cooking classes and folk concerts.

Visit ozarkfolkcenter.com or contact Michelle Stevens at michelle.stevens@arkansas.gov.

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Africa

COMPILED BY GABE WEBB

Tanzania brims with historical and cultural treasures

"If Africa's tourism opportunities were to be summarized by one single country, that country would be Tanzania," says Scholastica Ponera, managing director of Pongo Safaris & Tours.

Her company's itineraries span much of the country's geographic and biological diversity. Travelers visit the conservation areas, marine parks and national parks that make up more than one third of the Tanzania's area.

"Over 20 percent of the large mammal species of Africa are found across Tanzania's reserves," says Ponera. Serengeti National Park, which is slightly larger than Connecticut, is home to wildebeest, Nile crocodiles, honey badgers, lions and an estimated quarter-million zebra. The park shares a border with Ngorongoro Conservation Area, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Its eponymous crater is the largest caldera in the world.

"Tanzania has a diversity of cultures and great historical discoveries," says Ponera. "With over 120 resident tribes, there is plenty of local history and color to be found in all areas of Tanzania."

The Olduvai Gorge and Laetoli archaeological sites are significant for containing some of the earliest fossil evidence of human ancestors, including footprints dating back 3.7 million years. The ruins of Kilwa Kisiwani on the coast of the Indian Ocean are the remnants of an ancient sultanate that prospered thanks to the gold, ivory, porcelain and carnelian trade that flourished between Africa, India and China.

"This country has a number of world-famous historical sites that provide clear insights into the past and help people learn about human history," says Ponera. "The government of Tanzania is doing all it can to preserve and promote these sites for sustainable use."

Pongo Safaris offers its receptive services to NTA members, and all its programs are customized to each particular group, family and FIT. Tours range from half-day excursions—with lessons from local craftspeople—to month-long stays.

"We are recognized and have been awarded as the best tour operator to conduct safaris in remote, less-visited areas of the southern and western safari circuits of Tanzania, where other companies find it difficult to operate," says Ponera.

For more, contact her at info@pongosafaris.com or visit the company's website, pongosafaris.com.



CC FLICKR/MARCEL OOSTERWIJK bit.ly/2npnDA

Zebra in Tanzania's Ngorongoro Crater



CC FLICKR/RICHARD MORTEL bit.ly/2mkRlwQ

Pongo Safaris takes travelers to the ruins of Kilwa Kisiwani (above and below), an ancient port on the coast of Tanzania.



CC FLICKR/RICHARD MORTEL bit.ly/2nzbN8



Africa Safari Classics's tours allow travelers to meet locals on a journey through the Maasai Mara.

Visit Kenya's pilgrimage sites with Africa Safari Classics

Africa Safari Classics offers wildlife, pilgrimage and family-focused tours of Kenya and neighboring countries. Maurice Nzwii, sales director for the Nairobi-based receptive operator, says that developing these niche focuses has allowed his company to produce high-quality tours.

"We are specialized in serving the very unique needs of our customers," says Nzwii. "Our staff is also trained and motivated to handle the unique requirements of our differentiated product and clientele."

Wildlife safaris are designed to show travelers the greatest number of Kenya's famous creatures. Family safaris incorporate activities designed to build teamwork, communication and openness between relatives. These tours also include family-friendly accommodations.

"We take families to resorts offering family rooms, private dinners and many activities for both parents and children," says Nzwii.

The company also promotes its classic safaris, which mix wildlife viewing with luxury. "These are meant for those who want to view wildlife in style," says Nzwii. "They want to see wildlife, but they also want to stay in nice resorts, relax, swim and enjoy fine dining or shopping."

Nzwii especially emphasizes Africa Safari Classics' Christian pilgrimage tours. The company is a member of both NTA and the Faith Travel Association.

"Kenya is a famous pilgrimage destination because of several sacred places, spiritual sites and a very rich Christian heritage."

Highlights of the company's faith-based itineraries are Komarock Shrine, the statue of Blessed Sister Irene Stefani,

the National Marian Shrine of Kenya and Resurrection Garden. Pilgrimage tours typically last 10 days, and they include exploring Kenya's natural landscapes and seeing its wildlife.

To learn more about Africa Safari Classics, contact Nzwii at sales@aficasafariclassics.com or go to aficasafariclassics.com.



The Holy Family Basilica in Nairobi is Kenya's largest Catholic church and one of the houses of worship that Africa Safari Classics' guests visit during pilgrimage tours.

Courier's RESTAURANTS GUIDE



Rolling in the (sour)dough: San Francisco's Boudin Bakery & Catering has been serving up sourdough French bread to customers since 1849. In addition to trying Boudin's tasty baked goods, visitors can tour its Fisherman's Wharf location and take part in hands-on programs.

The NTA membership includes a variety of restaurants that provide unique dining experiences for travelers. When groups visit local restaurants and eateries of global brands, they can enjoy farm-to-table meals, special banquet facilities, discounted pricing, group-centric menus and order-ahead meal options. Save this guide for easy access to the association's restaurant members.

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 Feb. 21. Please check NTAonline.com for updated information on NTA-member restaurants and to learn more about the services they offer.

CANADA

QUÉBEC

Restaurant Du Vieux Port

Tina Mourdoukoutas
39 St-Paul St. East
Montréal, QC H2Y 1G2
+1.514.866.3175
tina@vpsteak.com
restaurantduvieuxport.com

UNITED STATES

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Rustlers Rooste

Rustlers Rooste
Peggy Traister
8383 S. 48th St.
Phoenix, AZ 85044-5302
+1.602.431.6407
peggy@rustlersrooste.com
rustlersrooste.com

CALIFORNIA

Apple American Group

Mariela Gamboa
2770 Taylor St.
San Francisco, CA 94133
+1.415.326.4954
mgamboa@appleamerican.com
appleamerican.com

Boudin Bakery & Catering

Scott Shuttleworth
221 Main St., Suite 1230
San Francisco, CA 94105
+1.415.200.8087
sshuttleworth@boudinbakery.com
boudinbakery.com

Fog Harbor Fish House

Jane Park-O'Donnell
PIER 39, #213
San Francisco, CA 94133
+1.415.982.5872
jane@simcorestaurants.com
fogharbor.com

Rusty's Surf Ranch

Cindy Pfeifer
256 Santa Monica Pier
Santa Monica, CA 90401
+1.310.399.8886
cindy@rustysurfranch.com
rustysurfranch.com

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Clyde's Restaurant Group

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3236 M St. NW
Washington, DC 20007-3615
+1.202.333.9180
maureen@clydes.com
clydes.com


Gordon Biersch Brewery Restaurant

Monica Orr
900 F St. NW
Washington, DC 20004
+1.202.783.5454
morr@cwrestaurants.com
gordonbiersch.com

Sherry Constance
613 Royal St., The French Quarter
New Orleans, LA 70130-2115
+1.504.522.7261 (12)
sconstance@courtoftwosisters.com
courtoftwosisters.com

Carolyn Boss
180 Loma Linda
Branson, MO 65616
866.597.2698
groupsales@goldencorral.net
goldencorral.com

Jennifer Buchter
3121 Old Philadelphia Pike
Bird-in-Hand, PA 17505
+1.717.455.5290
buchter@plainandfancyfarm.com
plainandfancyfarm.com

Dean Malos
3551 Plano Parkway
The Colony, TX 75078
+1.469.384.5128
dmalos@pizzainn.com
pizzainn.com 

COMMUNITY

NEWS AND UPDATES FROM THE NTA FAMILY



NAIM HASAN PHOTOGRAPHY

More than 80 longtime NTA members, past leaders and current board members gathered at the National Blues Museum to share memories and reconnect the night before Travel Exchange '17 kicked off in St. Louis. Turn to page 56 to read Linda Fort Harvell's reflections on the event.

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Meet the Members

PRESENTED BY **VISIT Clarksville**

Teatro ZinZanni

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

NTA contact: Emily Schiller,
group sales and event manager

Office Phone: +1.206.802.0011

Website: zinzanni.com/seattle

NTA member since: 2014

Tell me a little about Teatro ZinZanni.

Our main event is part circus, part cabaret and always magical. It is a three-hour whirlwind of international cirque, comedy and cabaret all served up with a multi-course feast and elegant libations. Our production is ever-evolving and constantly changing. We offer evening performances at least four nights a week, year-round.

What special things does Teatro ZinZanni offer for groups?

We are able to offer groups discounted tickets, advanced access to dates, preferred seating and special rates on merchandise and photography. We also work directly with our group clients to offer a custom experience.

What's coming up later this year?

Next up is "Joker's Wild," running through September 2017. It is set in a casino, and a mysterious gambler threatens to break the bank. With a pit boss you'd better not cross, a crew of juggling card dealers, acrobatic mimes and high-flying love birds, it's sure to be the hottest ticket in town!

Where did the name Teatro ZinZanni come from?

From our owner and founder, Norm Langill. It loosely translates to "King of Comedy."

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



I am planning a trip to Italy for the summer of 2017. I can't wait to dive into the rich history, fine wines and amazing cuisine!

What is your go-to movie?

My favorite is "Fried Green Tomatoes."

For more information, contact Schiller at eschiller@zinzanni.com.

Unlimited Croatia

ZAGREB, CROATIA

NTA contact: Andrea Cvitkovic, director

Office Phone: +1.917.463.3361

Website: unlimitedcroatia.com

NTA member since: 2016

What lead to you to start Unlimited Croatia last year?

I spent four years as director of the Croatian National Tourism Office in New York promoting Croatia to the U.S. clients and travel agents. Before that I worked in Croatia's travel industry for 20 years, so starting [the company] was a logical continuation of what I enjoy and what I do the best.

Talk about what travelers experience when they go on one of your tours to Croatia.

Unlimited Croatia is a boutique travel company specializing in diverse, authentic itineraries with a "live like a local" feel. They are all custom-made

and offer unique and unforgettable experiences that showcase the unexpected colors and flavors of the destinations.

What are a couple of your favorite things in Croatia that you like showing off to guests?

The region of Istria, where you can experience a dog truffle hunt, try wild asparagus and taste some of the world's best olive oils. Also, Plitvice Lakes, one of the greatest wonders of the world with its 16 cascading lakes; the Old City of Dubrovnik; the island of Hvar with its medieval village; and cooking classes in Konavle to learn how to prepare some local dishes.

Speaking of food, what's the most unusual thing you've ever eaten?

Frogs, grilled and wrapped in prosciutto, which are a traditional Croatian specialty from Dalmatia's hinterland.



Someone offered it to me a long time ago, but I was hesitant to try it. Once I did, I fell in love with it, and it became my favorite dish.

For more information, contact Cvitkovic at andrea@unlimitedcroatia.com.

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

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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.

Visit Philadelphia announces new hires and promotion



Werner

Visit Philadelphia hired two new staffers and promoted another in February.

Jim Werner was promoted to vice president of hotel relations and tourism development.

Kara Callahan is the organization's new vice president of advertising and strategic alliances.

Laura Burkhardt, the second new hire, is the vice president of visitor appeal.

"We're happy to welcome Kara and Laura and to promote Jim, a long-time member of our team," says Meryl Levitz,

president and CEO of Visit Philadelphia. "We're coming off a banner year for hospitality in 2016, and the new leadership positions will strengthen our talented team by helping us to fulfill our mission, reach our goals and maintain the success of leisure tourism in our region."

Callahan oversees the DMO's ad campaigns, and its integrated marketing, video production and industry partnership programs. She most recently worked for The Franklin Institute. In her six years there, she led marketing

strategy and developed promotional partnerships. Callahan also has won two regional Emmy Awards for her work at that museum.

Burkhardt joined Visit Philadelphia from her previous position at *Where Philadelphia* magazine. She had been with the publication since 2005. In her new role, she leads the organization's relationship development with local shops, museums, restaurants and attractions. She also manages Visit Philadelphia's photography initiatives for the web, advertising and social media.

Werner leads the development of new overnight leisure initiatives and manages the organization's relationships with hotels. He was promoted from his role as senior director of industry relations. He joined the Visit Philadelphia team in 2005, and he has taught tourism and hospitality management courses as an adjunct professor at Temple University since 2015.

Memphis CVB opens Australia-New Zealand Office

The Memphis CVB hired **Chris Ingram**, formerly of Tourism Australia, to lead its new marketing efforts in Australia and New Zealand. Ingram is based in Auckland and joins the CVB's existing international outreach specialists for China, Japan and Europe.

Oceania represents the third-largest international inbound market for Memphis, surpassed only by Canada and the U.K.

"Representation and partnerships have existed for Memphis tourism

in Europe for 25 years, resulting in Memphis as one of the premier and most visited destinations in the southern U.S.," says **Kevin Kane**, president and CEO of the Memphis CVB.

Mexico sets international tourism record

The **Mexico Tourism Board** announced that the country welcomed 35 million international travelers in 2016. The figure represents a nine percent increase over 2015.

"Mexico's sustained, fast growth is a testament to the incredible quality and diversity in our tourism offerings and the hard work for the entire industry, both internationally and domestically," says **Lourdes Berho**, CEO of the Mexico Tourism Board. "Plans are already underway to ensure 2017 builds upon these achievements and that Mexico continues to welcome all visitors and give them reasons to come back again and again."

The tourism industry employs more than 9 million Mexicans. The tourism board has set a goal to welcome 50 million international visitors by 2021.

Native American tourism sees increase in overseas visitation

The **American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association** reports that international visitation to Native American destinations tripled between 2007 and 2015.

AIANTA launched a training program called Go International, aimed at Native American tourism professionals who want to expand their international reach. The two-day course addresses product marketing and pricing and tracking visitation data.

The group has touted the importance of tracking visitor numbers in spite of the challenges presented by the rural nature of many Native American sites. It also launched **nativeamerica.travel** in 2015; the website helps prospective visitors explore available experiences and plan trips.

AIANTA reports that more than 1.9 million foreign visitors came to Native American sites in 2015, up from 693,000 in 2007. It expects visitation to increase to 2.3 million by 2020. ☺

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Where the buyers are:

If you're not at Travel Exchange, you're missing 80% of NTA tour operators who aren't attending other national shows.

*"For my first NTA experience,
I loved it from the very minute
I walked into the show."*

—Camie Lupinacci, Surftides Beach Resort
(Lincoln City, Oregon)



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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

Carbondale Tourism

Jordan Wren
Carbondale, IL 62901-3114 USA
carbondaletourism.org

Independence Parks/Recreation/Tourism

Frank Buhro
Independence, MO 64050-3066 USA
visitindependence.com

Oneida Nation of Wisconsin

Rich Figueroa
Oneida, WI 54155 USA
exploreoneida.com

Visit Philadelphia

Mark Beyerle
Philadelphia, PA 19103 USA
visitphilly.com/historic

TOUR OPERATORS

All Aboard USA

Leah Ann Ingram
Chattanooga, TN 37422 USA
allaboardusa.net

Amazing Destinations Ltd.

Steven Meyerson
Elmhurst, NY 11378 USA
amazingdestinationsltd.com

D & J Tours

Diwen Zeng
Chicago, IL 60609 USA

Domiruth Travel Service

Martin Harbaum
Lima, 18 Peru
domiruth.com

my Global Group Inc.

Dan Liu
Diamond Bar, CA 91765 USA

Reed Travel Journeys LLC

Paul Reed
Rapid City, SD 57702 USA

Ricana Tours CA

Emilio Raul Ordenana del Rio
Miami, FL 33129 USA
cubatoursviajes.com

Sunsnow Travel

Xiaofei Wang
Staten Island, NY 10304 USA

Sun Knights Travel

Simon Zhu
Diamond Bar, CA 91765 USA

Tye's Top Tour & Travel Inc.

Mel Tye
Merrimack, NH 03054-3822 USA
tyestravel.com

TOUR SUPPLIERS

Accord Bus LLC

Sharon Koenig
Brooklyn, NY 11231 USA
accordbus.com

Best Western Orlando Gateway Hotel

Tracey Sartini
Orlando, FL 32819 USA
bworlando.com

Conestoga Ranch Glamping Resort

Keith Battaglia
Garden City, UT 84028 USA
conestogaranch.com

Crowne Plaza HY36 Midtown Manhattan

Marijana Janjic
New York, NY 10018 USA
ihg.com/crowneplaza/hotels

EVEN Hotel Midtown East

Allie Kudrna
New York, NY 10017 USA
ihg.com/evenhotels/hotels/us/en/reservation

Fulton Theatre

Adam Andrusky
Lancaster, PA 17603 USA
thefulton.org

Greater Oregon Tours

Camille Gonzalez
Portland, OR 97220 USA
greatoregontours.com

Gulliver's Gate

Adriana Vargas
New York, NY 10036 USA
gulliversgate.com

Hampton Inn & Suites Missouri City

Rebekah Sillman
Missouri City, TX 77459 USA

Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center

Sharon Fine
Skokie, IL 60077 USA
ilholocaustmuseum.org

ITG Travel

Tim Cave
Chisago City, MN 55013 USA
itgtravel.net

Loyalty Inc.

Yvonne Kirby
Davenport, FL 33896 USA
loyaltyusa.com

TC Nevada LLC

Olga Haggerty
Las Vegas, NV 89118 USA
tcnevada.com

The Tour Exchange

Jacque Payne
Las Vegas, NV 89146 USA
thetourexchange.com

ASSOCIATES

Guidewell Connect, The Studio

Eugenio Ramirez
Jacksonville, FL 32246 USA
guidewellconnect.com

Rezdy LLC

Bob Gilbert
Las Vegas, NV 89169 USA
rezdy.com

CORPORATE PARTNER

TourConnect

Michael Herrmann
Frisco, TX 75034 USA
tourconnect.com

Where in the World is COURIER?

Board chair Jay Smith took some awesome reading to sunny Aruba. Email your photo with *Courier* to bob.rouse@ntastaff.com.



AD INDEX

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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.



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Milwaukee | Nov. 4-8, 2018



Charleston, S.C.
April 19-21, 2018



Tucson, Arizona
March 28-30, 2019



An Old War Horse Reunion

BY LINDA FORT HARVELL, CTP

BACK IN THE EARLY '90s, a group of longtime NTA members started having Old War Horse reunions. We came up with that name because so many of us had been attending NTA conventions for years, plus it just fit the group. We always held our reunions the night before convention kicked off—usually in a bar (imagine that). We even made Old War Horse T-shirts for each destination.

As the years progressed, the reunions stopped, and many of us retired from the travel industry. We've been able to keep up with each other through Facebook, but we had an amazing opportunity to get together again the night before Travel Exchange opened in St. Louis. On Feb. 26 the Old War Horses—along with the current board—were hosted by Sweet Home Alabama, Sports Leisure Vacations and NTA for a wonderful barbecue dinner at the National Blues Museum.

Out of 80 or so people at the event, around half were us ol' timers, including Keith Griffall, Ed Camara, Bob Hoelscher, Ed Dresel, Charlie McIlvain, Shawn Ford, Scott Hartcorn, Judith Thomas, Trip Bellows, Brenda Ison, John Schaffer, Bruce Beckham, Mary and John Stachnik, Mike Zirbel, Mark Hoffmann, Clayton Whitehead, Jim Warren, Misha Jovanovic, Michele Michalewicz,



Keith Griffall snaps a picture of (left to right) Michele Michalewicz, Judith Thomas and the author, Linda Fort Harvell.

Eugene Dilbeck, Marjorie Bender, Kris Lokemon, Tom Frenkel, Bob Hofmann, Ron McConnell, Gail Arndt, Ed Sturupp, Norris Flowers, Mike Neustadt and, of course, the heart of NTA, Jim Host.

I don't think any of us can express the overwhelming joy we felt each time we would see another Old War Horse walk in. There were hugs, more hugs, laughter, conversation, more conversation, more laughter and hugs ... always more hugs.

Most of us have known each other for well over 30 years. We've worked together, traveled the world together and attended a gazillion NTAs, where we were all very involved. The love and friendship we still have for each other is as strong now as it ever was. That's amazing, considering that many of us haven't seen each other in years. But those years just faded away as soon as we were together again, even if it was just for one brief evening.

The memories we shared were hysterical, if for no other reason than they have gotten much better with time (and with cocktails). What fun it was to sit and listen to someone sharing a story, only for another person to jump in and add their recollection of what really happened ... in their mind, anyway.

The Old War Horse Reunion falls into the category of "priceless."

Chances are there will never be another one (unless another sponsor wants to step up and invite us—and we'll help make that happen). Within the industry, we were an extremely close-knit group of travel professionals. As friends, we remain close-knit to this day ... 30-plus years later.

Just a little advice from an Old War Horse to you young 'uns in NTA: Read this story over and over. It's all about relationship building, whether you are a tour operator, a tour supplier or a DMO. It's all about cultivating and respecting the friendships that are developed over the years. It's about working together—and being together.

I was both a tour supplier and a DMO in my career, and my tour operator friends knew that when they booked with me, they were booking an experience. They could rely on me to make them look good, which created business for both of us.

What an amazing reunion we had in February. So many of us were there, yet in our hearts and minds, we grieved for those who have passed over to the Great Motorcoach in the Sky.

But for one night, we Old War Horses were together again. 🍷

Linda Fort Harvell was an NTA member for nearly 30 years, beginning in the mid-1980s. She chaired the NTA convention in 2002 and served on the boards of both NTA and the National Tourism Foundation. She resides in College Station, Texas.



Longtime NTA Executive Vice President Jim Host (center) chats with Ed Camara (left) and Mike Zirbel.

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