

DELIVERING BUSINESS ESSENTIALS TO NTA MEMBERS

FEBRUARY 2020

Courier

Take on me!

Travel Exchange '19 reveals many a-ha moments

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The '80s party at Travel Exchange



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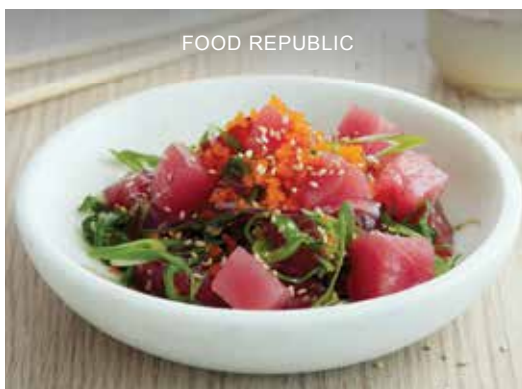
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FEATURES



It's all NTA

"Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind?" Even if you don't know that 1984 country song, you should know how much business and fun NTA members shared in Texas during Travel Exchange '19.



The wide world of cruising

From ocean and river cruises to sightseeing harbor tours, cruising continues to be booming market segment. *Courier* offers updates from six NTA members, as well as the full list of NTA-member cruise companies.



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PLANNING AHEAD

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ANNUAL STUDENT TRAVEL ISSUE

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



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**Bob Rouse**

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FEBRUARY CALENDARS are often decorated with hearts because of Valentine's Day. But I'd like to change that.

To me, a more important day—with apologies to my Valentine/wife—is Feb. 2. Because of the 1993 movie of the same name, Groundhog Day offers truly valuable lessons. The movie's main character, Phil Connors, is caught in a crazy time loop that replays his day in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, where he was dispatched to report on the town's famous groundhog.

Phil's curse of repeating a single day becomes a blessing: He changes for the better. Each day he fine-tunes his approach to the beautiful Rita, and along the way, he becomes a more considerate (and talented) human.

Once an arrogant boor, Phil becomes a wonderful person. And Rita, of course, falls for him ... which is kind of Valentiney.

But my takeaway is that positive change is possible when you seize the opportunity.

Another point is that I used this page in *Courier* to cite the lessons of "Groundhog Day" a few years ago. So, yeah, I'm repeating myself.

My point *this year* is to talk about change because our members are talking about change as it relates to their business. In "New directions," on pages 10–11, 15 members share their thoughts on change and taking chances. I'll offer more of their comments in future issues.

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Our biggest feature in February also includes change: The Travel Exchange photofest, beginning on page 16, highlights significant innovations to the show, as described through the comments of delegates. (What didn't change in Fort Worth was the NTA spirit of friendship and partnership. See Christen Eliason's essay on page 48.)

Also making a big splash in this issue are cruises—both sightseeing and multi-day. See pages 25–28 for updates on cruise product offered by NTA members plus a guide to companies that offer those excursions. *Courier's* Pat Henderson and Kay Saffari anchor the coverage.

This issue's City Spotlight shines on Portland, Oregon, as Kendall Fletcher guides you through the quirky-cool city that invites people to be ... quirky and cool. See pages 29–31.

After the first year of the NTA Loyalty Program, which awards points (and resulting benefits) for, um, loyalist behavior, the results are in. See the final tally on page 12.

This issue's Compass section, steered by Kay, Kendall, and Pat, takes you to destinations from South America to western Canada, with plenty of U.S. states and sites in between.

Speaking of U.S. states, I'll soon be crossing one off my unvisited list when I go to Alaska for Contact in March. If you haven't yet signed up for the event in Anchorage, there's still time to, you know, *change* that.

Read on,

On the cover:

Travel Exchange delegates at the '80s party celebrated the conclusion of their time together in Fort Worth.

Photo by Normand Huberdeau



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FOLLOWING THE 2019 ELECTION, which concluded at Travel Exchange '19 in Fort Worth, Texas, the NTA Board of Directors was introduced to members. The board is composed of newly elected directors plus those who continue to serve terms started in previous years.



Jim Warren, CTP

Jim Warren, CTP, Anderson Vacations, ascended to the position of chair for 2020, and by a vote of NTA members, Chase Poffenberger of Academic Travel Abroad serves as vice chair, with Debra Asberry of

Women Traveling Together serving as secretary. Rounding out the executive committee are Paul Larsen of Ed-Ventures, immediate past chair; Kelly Dean of Ottawa Tourism, DMO director; and Cory Mace of the North Central Group, tour supplier director.

Also serving on the 2020 board are tour operators Jorge Cazenave, CTP, Cazenave Argentina; Fraser Neave, CTP, Wells Gray Tours; Nish Patel, Mayflower Cruises and Tours; Jerry Varner, CTP, Making Memories Tours; Monique van Dijk-Seppola, Scandinavia Tours; and Christina Werner, CTP, Custom Holidays. DMO directors are Ashley Kingman, Travel Portland; and Dawn Burns, Deadwood CVB (newly elected). Tour supplier directors are Angela Harness, CTP, Tanger Outlets; and Jara Haas, CTP,

Major Marine Tours & Harbor 360 Hotel (newly elected).

Warren has a long history with NTA, serving as an active member and volunteer leader for nearly 30 years. Warren's words in a letter to his fellow board members reflect his optimism.

"2020 is going to be an exciting year of challenges and opportunities for NTA, and I couldn't be happier than to work with you to grow this wonderful association of business colleagues and great friendships," Warren wrote.



Catherine Prather, CTP

Also stepping into a new leadership role is Catherine Prather, CTP, who became the president of NTA on Jan. 1, following the five-year tenure of Pam Inman. Prather, who has worked at NTA since 1994, previously served as

executive vice president. She also was the association's interim president in 2014.

"I am excited, optimistic, honored, and ready to get to work," Prather said from the Travel Exchange stage in Fort Worth. "NTA will be a stronger association because our members will be stronger as we bring you more opportunities to connect and do business together."

The next board meeting will take place March 17 in Anchorage, Alaska, prior to Contact 2020.

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Pictured on the Travel Exchange stage in Fort Worth with NTA President Catherine Prather, center, are board members Paul Larsen, Fraser Neave, Jerry Varner, Monique van Dijk-Seppola, Jim Warren, Ashley Kingman, Kelly Dean, Christina Werner, Cory Mace, Chase Poffenberger, and Debra Asberry. Not present on the final day of Travel Exchange were Dawn Burns, Jorge Cazenave, Angela Harness, Jara Haas, and Nish Patel.

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COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

NTA Meet-ups get underway in February

Your association is beginning its 2020 series of Meet-ups in the two cities that will host NTA events this year: Anchorage (Contact) and Reno Tahoe (Travel Exchange). Meet-ups bring together members and prospects in specific cities for a couple of hours to hear from NTA leaders and ask questions about the association and the industry.

The first one is scheduled for Feb. 18 at 49th State Brewing Company in Anchorage at 3:30 p.m. The Meet-up will open with a happy hour (drinks and light snacks) and include remarks by NTA Vice President of Events Dawn Pettus, CTP. Two days later, she will lead the session in Reno; the location and time were TBD at press time.

If you are interested in attending either of the February Meet-ups, please RSVP to headquarters@ntastaff.com.

Below is a **tentative** list of cities for additional Meet-ups later in the year. Please check NTA's *Tuesday* newsletter for announcements regarding exact dates and locations.

Portland (February)	Florida (August)
Seattle (February)	Tennessee (September)
Las Vegas (June)	Ohio (October)
Los Angeles (June)	



NTA Meet-up during IPW

Also, if you want to host one of these events, please contact NTA Senior Manager of Events Laura McFadden, CTP, at laura.mcfadden@ntastaff.com.



A distinguished group of NTA members

During the Wednesday luncheon at Travel Exchange, NTA's *Courier* magazine recognized the 2020 Distinguished Dozen winners. Following the announcement of the gold recipients in each of the 12 categories, the winners gathered for a photo. 📷



NORMAND HUBERDEAU

From left: Bob Rouse, *Courier* editor; Kelly Dean, Ottawa Tourism; Tammy Phillips, Cracker Barrel Old Country Store; Carrie Whitley, Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad; Wendy Dobrzynski, Circle Wisconsin; Brad Ellington, Beau Rivage by MGM Resorts International; Mo Adams, Norwegian Cruise Line; Amber Van Der Hoeven, Lord Elgin Hotel; Lisa Ochomogo, The National World War II Museum; Mia Falkenstein, Hornblower Cruises & Events; Peter Waugh, Broadway Inbound/The Shubert Organization; Christy Keller, representing Switzerland Tourism; Maya Tamim and Janice Weinman, Hilton Worldwide; and NTA Services President Kami Risk.

IDEAS THAT DEFY

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Charles Lindbergh's historic trans-Atlantic journey in the *Spirit of St. Louis* extended the limits of air travel to an intercontinental scale.

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New directions

BY BOB ROUSE



TO SUCCEED in the travel industry, professionals strive to understand consumer behavior, technology, transportation, marketing, and economics. Success also requires solid judgment, because when the landscape shifts—as it is bound to do—practitioners must change with it.

Courier asked NTA members about their philosophy on change—plus their tolerance for risk. In the first of a series of articles on change, we'll learn how members with different roles and specialties answered this question:

How do you approach “new,” and what balance do you strike between going all in and holding back?

Jerry Varner, CTP

Making Memories Tours | Washburn, Missouri

As far as new customer trends go, we have a bit of an advantage living right in the middle of the U.S. Trends seem to start on the east or west coasts and then make their way to the center of the country. So I watch and listen to what my tour operator friends on each coast are saying concerning the feedback they are receiving from their customers. I like to wait a bit before jumping on the bandwagon.

Gail Myer

Myer Hotels | Branson, Missouri

We are usually not first-adopters. There have been too many fads that ended up needing more development or just weren't workable. All of our hotels are major brands affiliated with IHG, Choice Hotels, or Best Western. The brands do a good job of vetting trends and functionality to help us be early with initiatives that impact customer satisfaction. We have been very proactive towards green initiatives

and have made changes from a variety of angles: major initiatives such as installing solar panels and smaller efforts like replacing Styrofoam and removing straws.

Jay Smith

Sports Travel and Tours

Hatfield, Massachusetts

We try to get out in front of what fits for our niche. Decades ago, we started partnering with other tour operators when it wasn't cool yet. We were early adopters of co-branding, with partner companies that want to sell sports products linking to our landing pages. It is important for us to collect the original source of each inquiry so we can pay royalties and commissions, even if clients called us directly after seeing us on a partner's website.

Nayaz Noor

Safir Tours | Victoria, Australia

I have always approached the “new” all out! If I fail, I learn from it and try something else. For example, I try out new marketing methods every year—different trade events, exhibitions, etc. Some fail and some succeed. I let go of the failed ones.

Mark Hoffmann, CTP

Sports Leisure Vacations

Sacramento, California

We have always been willing to get out ahead of things. It's a way to find things that make you better. John Stachnik from Mayflower pioneered the practice of picking people up at homes to begin a tour and was one of the few companies to do it ... until he shared the idea at an NTA Crackerbarrel. That's where I stole it from him and added it to our services. Clients say it's one of the best parts of traveling with us.

Another example: Going to smaller groups raised the price of our already pricey tours, but the clients *love* it. And few of our competitors are willing to follow suit, at least until recently. Because people hate traveling in groups of 50, it was a competitive advantage.

Tommy Harpster

Adventures to Tuscany

Kunkletown, Pennsylvania

We look for opportunities to develop itineraries and activities that interest us personally, and we use the nimbleness of our extremely small tour group size to our advantage.

Two of the trends we've seen developing are a desire for soft adventure and nostalgic vignette-style experiences (authentic to a past era). Our new tour, The Beautiful Villages of Provence ... A Château in the South of France, includes a road rally to the summit of Mont Ventoux (soft adventure) and a French country-style picnic (past-era vignette) in the mountains overlooking the famous Provencal lavender fields. Activities like these are certainly a little tougher and more expensive to pull off, but when done well, they become a guest favorite.

Jonathan Elkoubi

Uno Restaurants | Boston

My approach hasn't changed over time: Always be an early adopter, but know when to back out if the technology doesn't get picked up or is no longer supported. When I was a tour operator, I was a strong believer in Windows smartphones, which were among the first to carry a GPS chipset and could run offline TomTom software without data. We provided those to our tour directors, even though the devices

were costly and not intuitive. But with the ascension of iPhones and Android phones capable of offering even better positioning accuracy through the Google Maps app, we didn't wait long to make a switch.

Lois Stoltzfus

The Amish Experience

Bird-in-Hand, Pennsylvania

We definitely look for something new and innovative. The proof is in how different our company is today compared to how it was founded. We started out doing only step-on tours. We still do them, but we've added and adapted over the years. Building a theater and filming "Jacob's Choice," our movie about a young Amish boy making a decision to stay or leave the Amish, was a huge risk for us.

Nick Calderazzo

Twin Travel Concepts

Kinderhook, New York

This is a daily struggle. We usually try two new projects a year—willing to lose money on them—just to see what could work. They are not big or bold ideas, not too risky.

Roland Neave, CTP

Wells Gray Tours

Kamloops, British Columbia

Since there are only four outbound tour operators in British Columbia, we don't have the luxury of watching someone else succeed or fail with a new idea. I'm willing to take risks and be the innovator, and we seem to have loyal followers who will try something new. Cost is always a factor, and there is a limit to what customers will pay for a new experience. Mystery tours, though, are always well above our average per diem, and they still sell out.

You have to be willing to invest time (which is usually staff pay) into exploring a new idea, and be ready to can it if it gets too expensive or complicated. Another piece of advice is to start small with a new idea. Managing inventory is crucial, so it is better to have a sellout and tell people inquiring later that it will be offered next year.

Marsha Wilson

Visit Durango (Colorado)

We're very open to change, but we weigh out the pros and cons for the Durango

area and ensure there is an ability to measure the results.

Nish Patel

Mayflower Cruises and Tours

Lisle, Illinois

It is very hard for a small/midsize company to go all in. When we approach something new that could be a game changer, we have to make sure that our core business is still intact. Things that keep the lights on have to be taken care of while also working on the new product. This creates additional work on team members and adds stress and all the negativity that comes with it. Having a good management team that can help with balancing the workload is important to the success of a new product.

Corey Taylor

Food on Foot Tours | New York City

The idea for a new tour came about after listening to operators complain about their food options and space and cost issues in the city. Working now with

leading food halls in NYC, the package we give operators includes a seated event where their guests have market dollars (fake money) to spend however they like with about 15 gourmet vendors.

Natalie Azarov

Cinderella Travel | Rego Park, New York

Sometimes efforts and investments are washed out by the changes in the industry. We are constantly looking for new ways to find new clientele, and it's not always technology. Service and personal touch are more important than technology.

Christian Utpatel

Terra Lu Travel | Homberg, Germany

Our work as a B2B inbound supplier is still very traditional. We are not working directly with travelers, so we do not have to follow every new communication technology and trend. However, we follow trends closely. Having teenagers at home helps a lot to understand new needs of fast communication. ☎

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NTA Loyalty Program royalty

AT THE BEGINNING of last year, your association launched another member engagement initiative, the NTA Loyalty Program. Throughout 2019, member companies accumulated points that count toward earning special rewards as they reached certain thresholds.

Members received points for a variety of activities, 17 in total, ranging from attending events and serving on a leadership team to advertising and referring new members. There were four levels—Trailblazer, Adventurer, Explorer and Pathfinder—they could reach, with each carrying an increased benefit.

As 2019 drew to a close following Travel Exchange, the final points were tallied, and there were 14 companies that qualified for some level of reward. The list of 2019 recipients includes nine tour operators, three DMOs, and two tour suppliers.

TRAILBLAZER (40 or more points)

Ed-Ventures (tour operator) 40
Rochester, Minnesota

ADVENTURER (36 to 39 points)

Ottawa Tourism (DMO) 36
Ottawa, Ontario

Travel Portland (DMO) 36
Portland, Oregon

EXPLORER (32 to 35 points)

Broadway Inbound (tour supplier) 35
New York City

Making Memories Tours (tour operator) 33
Washburn, Missouri

Scandinavia Tours (tour operator) 32
Vågå, Norway

PATHFINDER (28 to 31 points)

Anderson Vacations (tour operator) 31
Calgary, Alberta

Experience Grand Rapids (DMO) 31
Grand Rapids, Michigan

The Group Tour Company (tour operator) 31
Washington, D.C.

Wells Gray Tours (tour operator) 31
Kamloops, British Columbia

Academic Travel Abroad (tour operator) 29
Washington, D.C.

U.S. Space & Rocket Center (tour supplier) 29
Huntsville, Alabama

Custom Holidays (tour operator) 28
Allen Park, Michigan

Women Traveling Together (tour operator) 28
Annapolis, Maryland

The 2019 point totals were based on the following categories:

Attend Travel Exchange 5 points

Attend Contact 5

Serve on NTA Board of Directors 4

Full participation on Leadership 3

Have earned CTP designation 3

Refer a new member 3

Renew membership by Dec. 31 3

Contribute to NTA's advocacy efforts 3

Volunteer at Travel Exchange 2

Be a speaker at an NTA event 2

Purchase a print advertisement 2

Purchase a digital advertisement 2

Sponsor at Travel Exchange 2

Sponsor at Contact 2

Update company profile at NTAonline.com 2

Update individual profile on Engage 2
(1 bonus point awarded if Engage profile completed by March 31)

Use NTA logo on company website/collateral 1

“The goal was for the NTA Loyalty Program to give members a fresh way to get involved with the association. In the second year we hope participation will grow as members realize they can earn points in a variety of ways—ranging from attending events and volunteering to being a sponsor or an advertiser—that translate into getting additional benefits.”

—NTA Senior Manager of Member Engagement Jennifer Royse

Reward levels

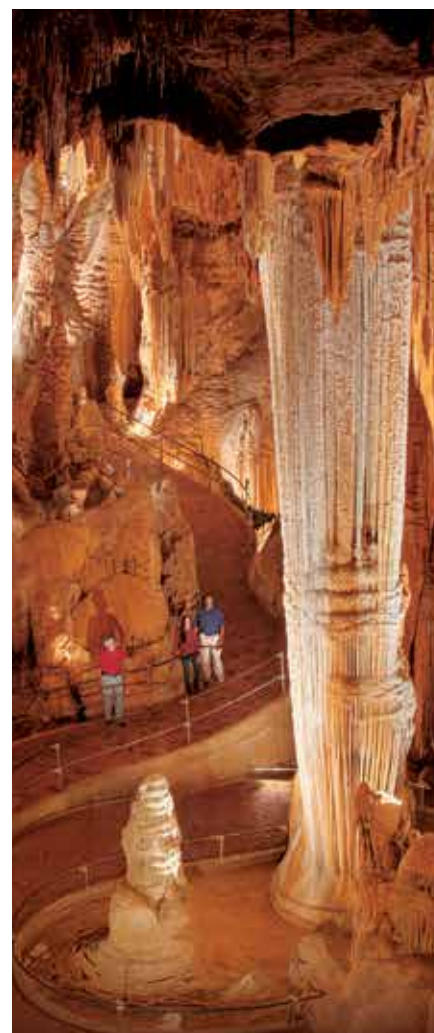
As the year goes along, companies will seek to reach one of four levels: Trailblazer (the highest level), Adventurer, Explorer, and Pathfinder. There are specific rewards for each level, with the main one being a percentage discount off one of four things: NTA membership, a Travel Exchange registration, a digital ad, or an enhanced listing in the *NTA Trip Planner*.

LEVEL (points required)	REWARDS
Trailblazer (40 or more)	25 percent off one of four things * Reserved seating at a Travel Exchange luncheon Additional recognition at Travel Exchange In-depth article in NTA's <i>Courier</i> magazine Mention in NTA's <i>Tuesday</i> newsletter
Adventurer (36–39)	20 percent off one of four things * Mention in a <i>Courier</i> article Mention in NTA's <i>Tuesday</i> newsletter
Explorer (32–35)	15 percent off one of four things * Mention in NTA's <i>Tuesday</i> newsletter
Pathfinder (28–31)	10 percent off one of four things *
<p>* A company can choose to use its percent off discount for one of the following four things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NTA membership • Travel Exchange registration • One digital advertisement • One enhanced listing in the <i>NTA Trip Planner</i> (only available for tour operators) 	

The program rewards are based on the points accumulated for a company, with all individuals in the organization combining to contribute toward the final total. A company earns only one set of points per category, even if they have multiple employees that qualify (for instance, three staffers attend Travel Exchange). The count starts anew at the beginning of each year, and members will receive updates throughout the year with their current point totals.

NOTE: The point values and reward levels shown with the charts on these pages were for 2019 and will likely change for this year. The updated information should be announced by mid-February.

For more information on the program, contact NTA Senior Manager of Member Engagement Jennifer Royse at jennifer.royse@ntastaff.com or go to ntaonline.com/mynta/nta-loyalty-program. ☎



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What will you discover?



Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

Wake up to Sleeping Bear's 50th anniversary

Located near Traverse City, Michigan, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. The recreational area beckons visitors with its 60-plus miles of beaches, coves and inlets, and its towering sand dunes.

The anniversary festivities got underway in January with the Hibernation Celebration and will continue throughout the year. A number of special events, programs, and panel discussions are in the works leading up to the founding date in October.

During a visit to the park, travelers can explore everything from the iconic lighthouse and the 400-foot dunes to lush forests and inland lakes. They can go on tours of on-site farmsteads and a historical maritime village, which detail the lives

of the area's early residents.

Another popular option is the park's astronomy programs that take place monthly from April through October. The stars shine bright over the coastal dunes, and park rangers and members of the Grand Traverse Astronomical Society educate attendees on the mysteries of the night sky.

The winter months offer a different experience, with the featured program being snowshoeing tours. The guided walks are available on Saturdays from January to mid-March, and separate sessions are offered for beginners and experts.

The 71,000-acre site draws about 1.1 million visitors a year, and it welcomed its 50 millionth visitor in August 2019.

For more information, go to nps.gov/slbe. —P.H.

Believers and bourbon in Kentucky's Holy Land

Tiny Springfield—population 3,000—is part of Kentucky's Holy Land, an area located in the state's Bluegrass region in Nelson, Marion, and Washington counties. The town offers

Springfield's St. Rose Church



MARK NALLY

destinations of religious significance, such as St. Rose Church, the first Dominican church built in the United States.

Stephanie McMillin of Springfield Tourism invites groups to enjoy the three-day Let the Spirits Move You tour. "This itinerary takes groups through our Holy Land, but also to three different distilleries, including Maker's Mark, that are part of the Bourbon Trail," says McMillin, who adds that the tour is popular with visitors of all types, from faith travelers to bourbon enthusiasts.

Surprisingly, the history of Catholics and bourbon in Kentucky is intertwined. In 1785 the Hayden family led a group of 25 Catholic families from Maryland to central Kentucky to escape religious persecution. Basil Hayden, the family patriarch, built the first Catholic chapel in the area, and he also made his own whiskey.

To honor his grandfather, Raymond Hayden built a distillery in Nelson County to produce Old Grand-Dad whiskey. Other Catholic families developed their lines of spirits, such as Jim Beam, Lord Calvert, and Willett; all of these brands are still produced today.

For more information, contact McMillin at seespringfieldky@gmail.com or go to visitspringfieldky.com. —K.S.

Maine's bicentennial birthday

Maine is commemorating its 200 years of statehood in 2020 with a wide range of events, exhibitions, and activities that showcase the state's unique treasures. The big kickoff event is the Statehood Day Celebration, to be held March 15 in Augusta. It will be followed by other signature events later this year, including these three:

- The Bicentennial Parade will take place May 16 in Lewiston and Auburn and celebrates Maine's veterans, youth, and culture with floats, bands, and more.
- The Tall Ships Festival (June 21–July 20) will stop in multiple ports of call, including Bangor, Belfast, Boothbay Harbor, Bucksport, Castine, Rockland, and Searsport. The closing weekend will include the Parade of Sail in Portland. Two other annual ship-related events taking place near Rockland during the festival are the Great Schooner Race (July 3) and the 2020 Maine Windjammer Association Parade of Sail (July 10); the latter will showcase Maine's entire windjammer fleet.
- The Grand Finale Weekend (Oct. 9–12) will take place in Augusta, Bangor, and other locations across the state. This four-day celebration highlights Maine's diverse culture and commercial innovation, and will culminate with the creation of a time capsule.

To learn more about Maine's bicentennial events, contact Hannah Collins of the Maine Office of Tourism at hannah.collins@maine.gov or go to maine200.org. —K.S. ☛

The Tall Ships Festival



SAILMAINECOAST.COM

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NDtourism.com/grouptravel

NORTH
Dakota
Be Legendary.™

It's all NTA

Business.

Education.

Friendships and fun times.

Sales leads and itinerary ideas.

The best connections.

Those are the benefits of belonging to NTA, and Travel Exchange is the shared event that encapsulates those concepts. From Dec. 8 through 12, a thousand travel and tourism professionals convened in Fort Worth, Texas, for the association's annual gathering.

On the pages that follow, see and read what they experienced, gained, and enjoyed. Because it's all NTA.

It was an intense, productive, and eye-opening experience. I now have insights into the world of travel that I didn't have before boarding my flight to Fort Worth.

—Katie Lockwood, Witte Travel and Tours

UNLESS NOTED, ALL PHOTOS: NORMAND HUBERDEAU



Energy at events



The Icebreaker at the Fort Worth Cultural District was truly a treat! From the s'mores outside to the awesome science center—so much fun!

—Deanne Cunningham,
North Dakota Tourism Division

Pinstripes was a lot of fun with bowling and bocce—another great way to meet contacts in the industry and to just have some fun!

—Martin Aldrich, Adventure Canada



I enjoyed the final night party, 'Hair We Go Again.' I even took a picture with two bearded guys and posted it on my Facebook page!

—Misha Jovanovic,
Misha Tours

Always a first time

The first-timer welcome was a great opportunity to get in touch with other rookies, and I made friends that night that I spent much time with—and learned a lot in the process.

—Deon Kitching,
Embrace South Africa Tours

How often can you say that you went to a conference for the first time and felt like it was your 10th? Everyone was genuinely welcoming and took time to get to know me as well as my company. This was my first TREX, and I sincerely hope it will not be my last.

—Emily Adler, Signature Theatre



Appointment-free Tuesday debuts

Delegates at Travel Exchange '19 saw the biggest change to business appointments since NTA pioneered the process 40-plus years ago. Buyers stepped out of their booths and into Sales Missions (coordinated group presentations led by destinations and their supplier partners) and Best Pitch presentations (short talks from overseas members).

Point of view: Buyers

I like seeing what you can do in the whole state when you're looking for things to fill itineraries in planned tours.

—June Anderson, Legacy Tour & Travel



The well-coordinated Sales Missions provided an opportunity to get a big-picture idea of what the DMOs have to offer. As a tour operator, this information is the catalyst for product development.

—Scott Brodsky, Country Heritage Tours



The new format of destination-led Sales Missions and Best Pitch session was a nice enhancement, giving tour operators the opportunity for a more in-depth experience to learn about regional destinations and overseas tour product.

—Michelle Pino, Northeast Unlimited Tours

These sessions gave us operators a break from sitting in the booth for five days and offered a greater outlook for the second group of appointments.

—Cynthia Billette, CTP, Columbia Crossroads Tours



I loved the new Sales Missions sessions! For a tour operator, it was great to have DMOs pitch to me a route that tied cities and attractions together for one tour. It's so helpful to see they are willing to help each other with a tour headed to the destination.

—Angie Varner, Making Memories Tours



I got ideas from the Sales Missions that I didn't pick up on in one-on-one DMO appointments the day before. And any time you can pick up a new piece of good info, it makes it worthwhile.

—Mark Hoffmann, CTP, Sports Leisure Vacations

Point of view: Sellers



I loved the Sales Mission portion of TREX! Presenting with our neighbors has spurred us to put our heads together and come up with regional itineraries.

—Judy Hector,
City of Sierra Vista (Arizona)

This is a fantastic addition to the appointments—providing a more laid-back opportunity to present what the destination has to offer.

—Sarah Robinson,
Tourism Winnipeg

What's really gratifying is that we had an attendee list with a lot of operators, and then several more showed up!

—Fran Mathews, Marine
Discovery Tours

It was one of those 'Eureka-why-didn't-we-think-of-this-before?' moments. A Sales Mission is like rolling 20 additional appointments into well-paced sessions.

—Stacy Thornton,
Boston Convention &
Visitors Bureau



Sales Missions allowed us to be in front of more buyers—outside of appointments—and gave us the opportunity to showcase our destination in a whole new way.

—Casey Ressler, Mat-Su CVB (Alaska)



Delivering their Best Pitch



This was one of my favorite changes. It was nice to see everyone shine on stage while telling about all the great things our international community offers.

—Shannon Larsen,
Ed-Ventures

Best Pitch was a brilliant exercise. Many U.S. members greeted me later on and made positive remarks about South Africa.

—Deon Kitching, Embrace South Africa Tours



Let's talk

Traditional business appointments are still a mainstay of connections at Travel Exchange, and the TREX Floor was a beehive of conversations.



The quality of appointments at NTA Travel Exchange was very good and exceeded expectations. Based on the conversations I had during appointments, I'm looking forward to working with operators on developing new itineraries in our destination.

—Casey Ressler, Mat-Su CVB (Alaska)



I was able to get bookings from 14 different tour operators—as well as an order for 2,000 tickets from one company! The business I generated on the sales floor paid for my NTA membership, travel, and expenses many times over.

—Sherri Patko, The Holy Land Experience

This was our second time to attend Travel Exchange, and we feel that we are a part of the NTA family now. Our appointments more than doubled, and everything became so much easier than the first year!

—Mincke Pijpers, Leiden, Key to Discovery



BOB ROUSE

Everyone was so nice and welcoming, but ready to jump into business, which allowed me to maximize my seven minutes without feeling rude. I appreciated when operators took notes and offered their business card. I left with many hot and warm leads.

—Kate Cox, Cochise County (Arizona) Tourism Council

Listen and learn

I especially liked the panel discussions because they gave me an opportunity to learn more about a specific vertical market and figure out if my destination is a good fit. This will be really helpful in beefing up my website, planning for future Exchanges, and requesting appointments.

—Judy Hector, City of Sierra Vista (Arizona)



The education sessions were a new thing for us. They were very interesting because it was good to learn about a variety of topics from professionals. This knowledge helps to grow your business.

—Agne Samkuviene, ESA Baltic

I was very interested in the mini-sessions on the stage regarding Google Analytics, trends, and other social media notes.

—Shannon Larsen, Ed-Ventures



The sessions are always great at Travel Exchange. Two in Fort Worth—'Plastics are the Travel Industry's Worst Nightmare' and 'Designing for Community Tourism'—were both timely and relevant for the Globus family of brands.

—Tracie Wingo, Globus family of brands

BOB ROUSE



Stage time

At Travel Exchange, a meal comes with side dishes of information and entertainment. Take a look at these stars of the Travel Exchange stage.



The cast of “Six” wowed delegates at the NYC Center Stage Luncheon, sponsored by Broadway Inbound and NYC & Company.



NTA members got a taste of upcoming events at the Thursday luncheon, hearing from David Kasser (top) of Visit Anchorage and Art Jimenez of Reno Tahoe.

Norwegian Cruise Line sent a cast of singers and dancers from “Footloose the Musical” to entertain at Tuesday’s luncheon.



Pam Inman commanded the Travel Exchange stage for the final time in Fort Worth. After serving as NTA president for five years, she delivered an upbeat and emotional farewell to members.



Awards



Bob Everidge Lifetime Achievement Award Jay Smith, founder and president of Sports Travel and Tours



NTA Pioneer Award Ted Bravos, co-founder and CEO of the International Tour Management Institute



Woman of Vision Award Kate Simpson, president and co-owner of Academic Travel Abroad (presented by Paul Larsen)



NTA Volunteer of the Year Agustin Caparros, A Closer Look Tours (presented by Pam Inman)



Shining Star Award Visit Anchorage, represented by David Kasser



Young Professional Award Kalyne Defever, Visit Detroit (presented by Paul Larsen)



James D. Santini Award Pam Inman, NTA, and John Shaffer, Luray Caverns (Two recipients in 2019)



TREXie Awards (for sponsor booth excellence)

Best of show: Washington Tourism Alliance

Best giveaways: Coeur d'Alene Casino Resort

Most interactive: U.S. Space & Rocket Center

Tastiest treats: Travel Oregon and Travel Portland

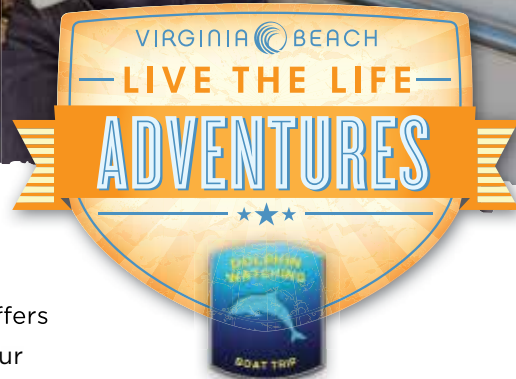
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Courier's guide to NTA-member cruises

Coastal Washington delivers diverse cruising options

BY PAT HENDERSON

While Seattle has long been the departure point for major cruise lines offering itineraries to Alaska, the area surrounding the city also is popular for shorter sightseeing excursions. The NTA membership includes the following four companies providing a variety of themed tours that highlight Washington's northwestern coast:



JIM BACHMAN/WHALES.COM

San Juan Cruises

Argosy Cruises

Using Seattle as its base, Argosy Cruises offers tours year-round. The company has the city covered through its one- to two-hour cruises on Elliott Bay, Lake Union, and Lake Washington. It has two five-hour excursions heading to Blake Island that include visits to Native American sites at Tillicum Village. argosycruises.com

Contact: Dana Barrett, danab@argosycruises.com

Island Adventures Whale Watching

This new NTA member offers excursions from three ports: Anacortes (February to November), Everett (March to May), and Port Angeles (May to October). The half-day tours keep the focus on multiple species of whales, sea lions, porpoises, shorebirds, and other animals. orcawhales.com

Contact: Matthew Plier, matt@orcawhales.com

Ride the Ducks of Seattle

For nearly 25 years, the wacky captains from Ride the Ducks have been delighting visitors during 90-minute rides around Seattle. The land portion covers Pike Place Market, Pioneer Square, Fremont, and the downtown waterfront, and the boat tour goes around Lake Union.

ridetheducksofseattle.com

Contact: Tammy Guill, tammy@ridetheducksofseattle.com

San Juan Cruises

Operated daily from June to September, and on weekends in May and October, the company's signature cruise starts and ends in Bellingham and showcases the whales around the San Juan Islands over the course of six hours. The company also offers culinary-themed and holiday tours. whales.com

Contact: Drew Schmidt, tours@whales.com

CroisiEurope offers Spanish-only river cruises

BY KAY SAFFARI

As an international organization, CroisiEurope is accustomed to meeting the needs of travelers from around the world—including Spanish speakers—and the company offers 30 different Spanish-language river cruises.

The customers who take advantage of Croisi's Spanish-only cruises hail from all over the world. "We have an office in Madrid, so we do have many customers from Spain," says Lynnette Peña of CroisiEurope, "but we also welcome Spanish speakers from Central and South America, the mainland U.S., and Puerto Rico."

One regularly requested tour is the five-day *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) river cruise in Holland and Belgium that includes stops in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Antwerp, along with excursions to other picturesque towns. Travelers will see the famous tulips of Holland when they visit Keukenhof, the largest and most famous flower park in the world. Every year more than seven million flower bulbs are planted here, resulting in a blanket of color when the tulips, daffodils, irises, and other flowers bloom.

Other popular Spanish-only itineraries include a nine-day cruise on the Rhine River that originates in Holland and continues to Germany, France, and Switzerland; and a seven-day cruise along three rivers—the Rhine, the Main, and the

Moselle—that originates in Strasbourg and travels to various destinations in Germany.

For more information, contact John McGlade at jmcglade@croisieurope.com or visit croisieurope.com or visit croisieurope.com.

The Spanish-only cruises are being highlighted in conjunction with NTA's Hispanic Travel Market Initiative. To learn more about the program, contact Kay Saffari at kay.saffari@faithtravelassociation.com.



CROISIEUROPE RIVER CRUISES

Keukenhof

Listen Technologies provides cruise narration product

BY PAT HENDERSON

Listen Technologies offers a fresh option for tour operators and cruise providers looking to add digital narration to their cruises. This new associate member, which joined NTA in early 2019, has developed Navilution Wi-Fi, a system that delivers GPS-triggered audio—available in different languages—to passengers' mobile devices.

"Up to 1,000 visitors per tour can easily download the app and have audio commentary in seconds, choosing from the languages and narratives offered by the operator, and they are able to move freely about the vessel and still hear the commentary clearly," says Jonathan Stanley, Listen's chief experience officer and president. "Our Navilution Wi-Fi solution works for day tours, ferry rides, longer cruises—whatever the tour company offers."

One of the main differences from other narration products is the level of customization. Listen Technologies works with travel companies to develop the audio content, which can be written by Listen's creative staff or based on scripts the customer provides.

"We do an on-site visit including our creative team and writers, and we work with the tour company to uncover and write about the hidden gems in their destinations that tell a great



LISTEN TECHNOLOGIES

story," Stanley says. "We also do research, looking in destination archives and other sources to write compelling stories that engage and delight visitors. More often than not, clients end up having us do the scripts once they see the difference."

The company also offers similar audio options for bus, trolley, train, and walking tours.

For more information, contact Doug Humphreys of Listen Technologies at doug.humphreys@listentech.com or go to listentech.com/listentalk.

The following list includes information on NTA members that charter or own ships and offer their own cruises. It includes companies that operator multi-day itineraries and ones that provide shorter sightseeing excursions. The details were provided by the member contacts and were current as of Jan. 6.

With this and all other guides that appear in *Courier*, members can enhance their presence. Contact kendall@ntaservicesinc.com for details.

MULTI-DAY CRUISES

OCEAN CRUISES

Adventure Canada

Jean Bouffard
55 Woodlawn Ave.
Mississauga, ON L5G 3K7
+1.916.624.2878
jean@adventurecanada.com
adventurecanada.com

Fantasy Cruises

Jeff Behrens
P.O. Box 448
Pierson, FL 32180
800.234.3861
fancruz@rockisland.com
smallalaskaship.com

Holland America Line Inc.

Heidi Jo Davis
13338 SW Gallop Court
Beaverton, OR 97008
+1.971.226.5686
hdavis@hollandamerica.com
hollandamerica.com

Katarina Line – Incoming Croatia

Katica Hauptfeld
V.Spincica 13
Opatija, Croatia 51410
800.485.3121
info@katarina-line.hr
katarina-line.com

MSC Cruises

Wayne Peyreau
6750 N. Andrews Ave., Suite 100
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309-2180
+1.954.958.3283
wayne.peyreau@msccruisesusa.com
msccruisesusa.com

Norwegian Cruise Line

Monique Adams
2446 Pinnacles Drive
Rocklin, CA 95677
+1.916.624.2878
madams@ncl.com
ncl.com

Oceania Cruises

Tricia Wolf
1579 Brass Lantern Way
Reston, VA 20194
+1.703.919.3691
twolf@oceaniacruises.com
oceaniacruises.com

Rainforest Cruises

Jeremy Clubb
1020 Meridian Ave. #401
Miami Beach, FL 33139
888.215.3555
cruise@rainforestcruises.com
rainforestcruises.com

UnCruise Adventures

Yolanda Brown
3826 18th Ave. West
Seattle, WA 98119
888.862.8881
yolandab@uncruise.com
uncruise.com

RIVER CRUISES

Abercrombie & Kent USA

Keith Baron
1411 Opus Place
Executive Towers West II, Suite 300
Downers Grove, IL 60515
+1.630.725.3400
kbaron@abercrombiekent.com
abercrombiekent.com

American Queen Steamboat Company

Bob Salmon
One Commerce Square Bldg.
40 South Main St., 21st Floor
Memphis, TN 38103
+1.901.654.2600
bsalmon@aqsc.com
americanqueensteamboatcompany.com

Celebration River Cruises

Susan Yarolem
2501 River Drive
Moline, IL 61265-1671
+1.309.764.1952 (204)
susan@celebrationbelle.com
celebrationbelle.com

CroisiEurope America

John McGlade
365 Route 304, Suite 206
Nanuet, NY 10954-1601
+1.845.507.4068
jmclade@croisieurope.com
croisieuropeamericacruises.com

Euro River Cruises

John McGlade
365 Route 304, Suite 206
Nanuet, NY 10954-1601
+1.845.623.6100
jmclade@eurorivercruises.com
eurorivercruises.com

Globus family of brands' Avalon Waterways

Pam Hoffee
5301 S. Federal Circle
Littleton, CO 80123
+1.303.703.7000
phoffee@globusfamily.com
globusfamily.com

Mayflower Cruises and Tours

Nish Patel
650 Warrenville Road, Suite 500
Lisle, IL 60532
+1.630.435.8500
nish@mayflowercruisesandtours.com
mayflowercruisesandtours.com

Riviera River Cruises

Marilyn Conroy
1515 Black Rock Turnpike
Fairfield, CT 06825
888.838.8820
sales@rivierarivercruises.com
rivierarivercruises.com



St. Lawrence Cruise Lines

Mona Fox
253 Ontario St., Suite 200
Kingston, ON K7L 2Z4
+1.613.549.8091
reservations@stlawrencecruiselines.com
stlawrencecruiselines.com

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Tauck

Tom Armstrong
10 Westport Road
Wilton, CT 06897
800.468.2825
info@tauck.com
tauck.com

Variety Cruises

Naomi Kabak
545 Eighth Ave., Suite 720
New York, NY 10018
+1.212.500.4275
nkabak@varietycruises.com
varietycruises.com/english

SIGHTSEEING CRUISES

CANADA

Ontario

Gananoque Boat Line Limited

Neil McCarney
P.O. Box 190
Gananoque, ON K7G 2T7
+1.613.382.2144 (106)
neil@ganboatline.com
ganboatline.com

Hornblower Niagara Cruises

Kelley Coville
5775 River Road
Niagara Falls, ON L2G 3K9
+1.905.394.3113
lcarr@hornblower.com
niagaracruises.com

Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours

Jessica DiCarantonio
61 Melville St., P.O. Box 1215
Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON L0S 1J0
+1.905.468.4800 (223)
jessica@whirlpooljet.com
whirlpooljet.com

Prince Edward Island

Northumberland & Bay Ferries Limited

Monica MacNeil
94 Water St.
Charlottetown, PE C1A 1A6
+1.902.870.9644
mmacneil@nfl-bay.com
ferries.ca

Québec

Lachine Rapids Tours

Elena Magni
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Portland: Free to be

BY KENDALL FLETCHER



PORTLAND is a place where people are free to be themselves. From artisans and gardeners to doughnut-lovers, there's a place for all—and Ashley Kingman with Travel Portland takes us on a stroll through the very walkable city to the must-see, long-established attractions as well as all the new and exciting ones.

“For a growing and evolving city, people are still wildly friendly, smile at strangers, and thank their drivers when they get off a bus,” Kingman says. “Before I moved here, when I was a visitor myself, I fell in love with the energy from the locals. In all of the different and charming neighborhoods, I saw artists, makers, and entrepreneurs doing and creating interesting and innovative things. This was very inspiring.”

Here are a few themes to help visitors find their own way in Oregon's largest city.

Shopping

Shoppers are free to be themselves, too. Portland (the whole state, actually) offers tax-free shopping.

“Powell's City of Books is a must,” Kingman says of the Portland landmark that is the world's largest new and used independent bookstore. Open 365 days a year, the shop covers a city block with 1.5 million books, sorted into 3,500 different sections. And while book seekers could

spend possibly all their Portland time in this location alone, they can also visit the store's branches on Southeast Hawthorne Boulevard; in nearby Beaverton; and at Portland International Airport.

The Portland Saturday Market (technically the Portland Saturday AND Sunday Market) breaks a record, too: It's the largest continually operating outdoor arts and crafts market in the U.S. More than 250 regional small business-owners



CHRISTOPHER ONSTOTT

Powell's City of Books

For more information, contact Travel Portland's Ashley Kingman ashley@travelportland.com or go to travelportland.com.



Saturday Market finds

JAMIE FRANCIS

International
Rose Test
Garden

JIM FULLAN/TRAWEL PORTLAND

and artists set up shop in Waterfront Park in the city's historical Old Town.

With live music and an array of exotic food vendors, the market, which has operated since 1974, offers one-of-a-kind handcrafted goods as well as opportunities for shoppers to interact with the artists. It's open every Saturday and Sunday, March through Christmas Eve.

Crafty Wonderland is a downtown shop housing the work of more than 200 local artists. The store's shelves are covered in the creative and quirky, like earrings made to look like a map of Portland and Sasquatch baby onesies. And twice a year, Crafty Wonderland becomes a marketplace (the largest handmade craft show in the Northwest, in fact) at the Oregon Convention Center when those 200-plus artists come together to share and sell their products.

Gardening

From downtown to the outskirts, Portland is a colorful blossom in the bed of garden tourism. And it's not just a springtime thing, either.

The Lan Su Chinese Garden, open year-round, also takes up a city block. Located in the Chinatown district and built by Suzhou artists in authentic Ming Dynasty style, the garden has open colonnades, bridges, and pavilions to stroll. Visitors can see exquisite landscaping at the edges of Zither Lake, have tea at The Tao of Tea, and spend time in reflection during a horticulturist-led public tour of the grounds.

The International Rose Test Garden began as a safe haven for hybrid roses grown in Europe during World War I, and it now carries the title of the oldest official public rose test garden in the U.S. With more than 10,000 roses from 650 varieties, the garden is a free attraction and open April through September. Other gardens include the Portland Japanese Garden (also open year-round), the Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden, and the Peninsula Park Rose Garden. Visitors can take a meditative bike tour that digs deeper into garden design.

Speaking of roses, the city's official festival, the Portland Rose Festival, is a century-old fête with more than 60 events beginning in late May and ending with dragon boat races the second week of June. The iconic NTA-member

festival features three parades (the Junior Parade, the Starlight Parade, and the signature Grand Floral Parade filled with flowers), as well as the annual Rose Show, walks and runs, a waterfront carnival, concerts, and fireworks. For more information, go to rosefestival.org.

Eating (and drinking)

“Portland has long prided itself as a major food destination, and I’m excited that we have several new tour companies that have started offering more high-quality, unique food tours around the city,” Kingman says. “Operators can now book groups on foodie tours focused on cool neighborhoods, brunch, and of course, coffee and doughnuts.”

At Voodoo Doughnut, sweet-toothed patrons will find out-of-the-ordinary confections that have been featured on the likes of “The Today Show,” “Portlandia,” and MTV, and in *People*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, and, of course, *Courier*—to name a few. Some of its most unconventional items on the menu include “Ring of Fire” (a chocolate cake doughnut covered with cinnamon sugar, cayenne pepper, and a dried red chili pepper) and “Portland Cream” (filled with Bavarian cream and topped with chocolate and “eyeballs” representing the vision of Portland). Some doughnuts are cereal-topped, some are tie-dye topped, and others are a bit more eyebrow-raising. Kingman says other popular local doughnut shops include Blue Star, Coco Donuts, and Pips.

And for some good joe, Water Avenue



Voodoo Doughnut

Coffee is a well-known spot that has micro-roasted craft coffees, and Cup & Bar offers the city’s first coffee and chocolate tasting room and café with small batch coffee and craft chocolate. The Third Wave Coffee Tour is a hot way to hit up multiple locations.

By nature, food trucks are there one minute and gone the next. But Portland has an established food-cart scene where the mobile restaurants are parked in groups, aka “pods.” There are more than 600 food carts, and most have plenty of seating for spreading out samples. In Southwest Portland, Hawthorne Asylum is a pod with global tastes—from Deep South/South African-infused fried chicken to Korean tacos. Lots of Latin-inspired fare can be found at the Portland Mercado, where the food carts

are Latino-owned. Groups can also take the Food Carts Portland tour to get well-versed (and well-fed).

Creating

Kingman says a newer area of focus for tours is the local maker culture, which shines a light on the eccentric spirit of Portland. The city is full of opportunities for entrepreneurs to get the ball rolling with their craft, and visitors can get their own DIY on in these creative spaces.

Carter & Rose on Southeast Division Street is the creation of two best friends, a ceramicist and a florist, who started a business together. Crafters can come in during open clay studio time for a hands-on session, and they can browse the store’s collection of trendy wall planters.

Creo Chocolate is a family-owned and operated factory where award-winning chocolate is created—from bean to bar. The Make-A-Bar Tour allows visitors to learn all about the process and make their very own confection.

The DIY Bar is a maker space where groups can gather and find their own focus. They can take on a variety of projects, including making leather luggage tags, beer koozies, and cat scratchers while “craft-tenders” watch over the processes and provide assistance if needed. Local beer, wine, and cider are available for added fun.

Makers festivals include the Mississippi Street Fair in July, the Alberta Street Fair in August, and the Festival of the Last Minute in December. ☘



Polish food cart

Atlantic Coast

COMPILED BY KAY SAFFARI

Food and fun in Miami

Miami is a popular vacation destination in South Florida, offering beautiful beaches, great weather, history, culture, and a variety of food options. For groups interested in experiencing Miami's culinary scene in a hassle-free way, Miami Culinary Tours is the answer. The company offers seven different tours (with the most popular three described below) and creates private tours just for groups.



Group culinary tour

MIAMI CULINARY TOURS

The Little Havana Food & Cultural Tour

A TripAdvisor award-winner, this tour allows visitors to experience authentic Cuban food while learning about Little Havana's culture and traditions. The tour includes five different food-related stops as well as visits to a cigar factory, Domino Park, and the Cubaocho Art Museum.

Wynwood Food & Art Tour

Participants can try Miami cuisine at five different restaurants and enjoy the largest open-air street-art collection in the world. They'll learn about Tony Goldman, the developer who started the outdoor art movement in Wynwood, as well as the prominent street artists who created the public art in the area near downtown. Visitors can enjoy always-changing street installations that represent historical traditions of graffiti and mural art.

South Beach Food & Art Deco Tour

Travelers can join a local guide for a walking tour of the Art Deco district of Miami and hear the stories of this very unique neighborhood. As they take a leisurely walk along Ocean Drive, they can learn about the different types of architecture in the area and about its colorful history. The six food stops include tasting the best empanadas in town, experiencing Floribbean cuisine, and enjoying Italian gelato.

Says Grace Della of Miami Culinary Tours, "When you book through us, we handle all restaurant reservations, and your group will enjoy the best Miami dining experiences, with preferred seating and no waiting."

For more information, contact Della at info@miamiculinarytours.com or visit miamiculinarytours.com.

A Golden opportunity for groups

*Of the dim sweet woods, of the dear dark woods,
Of the heavenly woods and glades,
That run to the radiant marginal sand-beach within
The wide sea-marshes of Glynn.*

Those words, part of poet Sydney Lanier's "The Marshes of Glynn," describe the watery landscape near St. Simons Island, Georgia. The destination, which is the largest barrier island in the Golden Isles, offers a tranquil atmosphere that allows travelers to relax and enjoy its coastal beauty.

Many visitors begin aquatic exploration of the area by taking a sightseeing cruise. These nature-based tours typically last between 90 and 120 minutes, and many of them showcase the popular bottlenose dolphins that inhabit the area's waters.

"There's no better way to experience the amazing marine wildlife of the Golden Isles than by setting sail on a daytime or sunset dolphin cruise with trusted captains and their knowledgeable staff," says Scott McQuade of the Golden Isles CVB, who notes that groups can reserve private sailings if needed.



Richland Rum Distillery

RICHLAND RUM

Another unique local option is the Richland Rum Distillery. The famous Georgia rum producer recently opened a distillery in the Golden Isles, and tours and tastings are offered daily. As they roam around the state-of-the-art facility, travelers can learn the steps it takes to turn unrefined cane syrup into the tasty liquor. Each tour concludes with tastings for guests 21 and older.

To learn more, contact McQuade at scott@goldenisles.com or go to goldenisles.com.

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Wild horses gallop along the Crystal Coast

The Crystal Coast: Beaches, beauty, and wild horses, too

The Crystal Coast, North Carolina's Southern Outer Banks, features 85 miles of beautiful Atlantic Ocean shoreline, 11 unique communities, and a variety of outdoor adventures including hiking, sport fishing, boating, kayaking, and of course, swimming and sunbathing.

Cape Lookout Lighthouse—known as the Diamond Lady—is one of the signature local attractions. This 160-year-old landmark, which is part of Cape Lookout National Seashore, is only accessible by passenger ferry and was visited by 160,000 people in 2019.

Other popular sites include Fort Macon on Atlantic Beach, a Civil War-era structure with exhibits; the North Carolina Aquarium in Pine Knoll Shores; and the NC Maritime Museum in Beaufort, which features artifacts from Blackbeard's ship, found just offshore. The Crystal Coast is also famous for the more than 150 wild horses that inhabit the area, descendants

of the Spanish Mustangs freed from shipwrecks in the 1500s.

For groups interested in festivals and special events, the Crystal Coast hosts more than 250 each year, including the North Carolina Seafood Festival, which attracts more than 150,000 visitors. The Big Rock Blue Marlin Tournament is a weeklong event with prizes worth \$2.5 million, and the area hosts three major music festivals, the Beaufort Wine and Food Festival, the Crystal Coast Triathlon, and several 10K and marathon running events.

Says Jim Browder of Crystal Coast Tourism Development Authority, "With more than 110 independent restaurants, 1,600 hotels, 5,000 vacation rentals, and a gorgeous setting that has inspired authors such as Nicholas Sparks and Kristin Woodson Harvey, the Crystal Coast is a perfect destination for your group."

For more information, contact Browder at jim@crystalcoastnc.org or visit crystalcoastnc.org.

Unique experiences in Prince William County

Just 30 miles from Washington, D.C., Prince William County is a destination that offers experiences perfect for groups looking for something unique.

National Museum of the Marine Corps

This state-of-the-art facility honors and preserves the story of the U.S. Marines with artifact displays and interactive exhibits that provide visitors with the sights and sounds of Marines in action. usmcmuseum.com

Dining on the Marine Corps base

Groups can dine on an active military base—the Marine Corps base at Quantico. Award-winning Chef Frank, personal chef to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, will create an unforgettable culinary experience for groups.



National Museum of the Marine Corps

The Quantico National Cemetery experience

Visitors can take a guided tour of the cemetery and pay their respects with a private flag-laying ceremony at the graves of veterans whose remains were previously forgotten. This event is organized by the Missing in America Project, a group that provides full military burial for the unclaimed remains of U.S. veterans.

Progressive meal in Occoquan

In the historical riverfront town of Occoquan, travelers can enjoy a driving tour with the mayor and a fun progressive dinner in three different locations—appetizers at Bottle Stop, the main course at Madigan's Waterfront, and dessert from Mom's Apple Pie aboard the *Miss Rivershore*.

Wine-blending class

The Effingham Manor Winery offers a fun group activity featuring a tour of the property, a wine tasting, and a wine-blending class. Included in the class is a team competition in which groups try their wine-blending skills, and Effingham's winemakers judge the contest.

Says Mark Kowalewski of Visit Prince William County, "Groups can also have dinner with the distiller at MurLarkey Distilled Spirits or attend special events, such as the Occoquan RiverFest in June or the Tank Farm Open House in September."

For more information, contact Kowalewski at mkowalewski@pwcgov.org or go to visitpwc.com.

Musical entertainment in Myrtle Beach

Gilmore Entertainment has been a leader of musical variety shows in the Southeast since 1986, when the Carolina Opry Theater was founded in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. As the first in the area, this musical theater has outlasted others and is offering five different shows and 16 special events and concerts in 2020.

This year, award-winning director and producer Calvin Gilmore is bringing changes and new cast members to his live variety shows, “The Carolina Opry,” “Time Warp,” and “Pure Magic.” Gilmore and his shows have been featured by *USA Today*, “NBC Nightly News,” *Southern Living Magazine*, *Variety*, and several others.

“We are the only Myrtle Beach theater to receive the coveted South Carolina Governor’s Cup, as well as being voted South Carolina’s Most Outstanding Attraction,” says Jordan Watkins of Carolina Opry Theater.

“There’s even talk of a brand-new show debuting in 2020, but the details are still a secret!”

In addition to the original musical productions, the theater is offering a full schedule of celebrity concerts in 2020, including Travis Tritt, Confederate Railroad, The Marshall Tucker Band, Gladys Knight, and Paul Reiser—as well as the Russian National Ballet’s “Swan Lake.”

Groups can also attend one of the many tribute concerts planned for 2020, such as “Stayin’ Alive” (Bee Gees), “Purple Experience” (Prince), “Symphonic Sinatra,” “Hotel California” (Eagles), “Zoso” (Led Zeppelin), “Invincible” (Michael Jackson), “Resurrection” (Journey), “Killer Queen,” and the music of ABBA.

For more information, contact Jordan Watkins at gsales@cgp.net or visit carolinaopry.com. ☎



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Great Frontier U.S. COMPILED BY KENDALL FLETCHER

From reptiles to Rushmore

Rapid City is the second-largest city in South Dakota, and it offers equally grand experiences on its Bucket-List Sites & Big Things Beyond itinerary.

The four-day program is a mixture of art, wildlife, and museums, as well as some astounding scenery that can only be found in the national and state parks of South Dakota.

Here are highlights from the itinerary:



Art Alley

Day 1

City of Presidents The strollable Rapid City streets are lined with life-sized bronze sculptures of American presidents.

Art Alley This ever-changing downtown outdoor gallery and public art project exhibits local artists' work, from murals to free-form graffiti.



Reptile Gardens

Day 2

The Journey Museum and Learning Center It's the place to learn all about the legend of the formation of *Paha Sapa* (Lakota for the Black Hills).

Reptile Gardens Along with more than 50,000 exotic flowers to see (and smell), the attraction has more reptiles than any other place in the world. Brave visitors can hold a python and meet Fluffy the alligator.



Mount Rushmore

Day 3

Mount Rushmore The enormous mountainside landmark features a granite quartet of American presidents—and it's pretty famous.

Custer State Park Its 73,000 acres are home to the nation's largest free-roaming buffalo herds, and visitors can take in the park's beauty from a Buffalo Safari Jeep Tour.



Badlands National Park

Day 4

Crazy Horse Memorial The grand monument of Lakota warrior Crazy Horse is the largest mountain carving in progress. Visitors can also see the on-site Indian Museum of North America.

Badlands National Park The eroding terrain and unique wildlife are sights to behold, and the park is the last known location of the Ghost Dance, a ritual dance that was part of a cultural movement believed to bring back the natives' old way of life.

For more information, contact Visit Rapid City's Lindsey Myers at myers@visitrapidcity.com or go to visitrapidcity.com.

Get back in the saddle in Cody

It's all about the nostalgia at Dan Miller's Cowboy Music Revue, according to Business Manager Wendy Corr.

"That famous line, 'Back in the saddle again,' from Gene Autry's song, evokes memories of carefree childhood days and time spent around a television as a family, pulled into a world of make-believe where the good guys wore white hats and always won," Corr says. "Visitors have a chance to relive those fond memories at Dan Miller's Cowboy Music Revue. Within the first few minutes, they're tapping their feet and singing along to songs they haven't heard in decades."

The Wyoming-based attraction opened its doors 15 years ago in downtown Cody—a town with traditional Western characteristics that Dan Miller says made it the perfect place to establish his show. It's also located at the east entrance of Yellowstone National Park.

Miller comes from years spent in television as an award-winning game show host and rodeo announcer. His daughter, Hannah, who got her start on stage with her dad at age 6 reading a cowboy poem, now plays the fiddle and mandolin and provides vocals. And Corr isn't just the business manager; she also is the group's vocalist and bass player. The band is known for cowboy, country, gospel, and folk tunes with an old-time feel.

Dan Miller's
Cowboy Music Revue

DAN MILLER'S COWBOY MUSIC REVUE



The show partners with the historical Irma Hotel, built in 1902 by Buffalo Bill and situated next door. Guests can purchase a show package including a prime rib buffet at the hotel for under \$40.

"For many, this combination offers classic Cody hospitality and quality—an aspect that Miller believes is important," Corr says. "Whether visitors choose the dinner and show or just come for the music, Dan Miller's Cowboy Music Revue and the Irma Hotel provide a taste of classic cowboy culture in a town known for its rich Western heritage."

For more information, contact Corr at cowboymusicrevue@gmail.com or go to cowboymusicrevue.com.

Unique Montana tours? No prob-llama

With so much Native American history and gorgeous scenery that shape western Montana, tours of Montana's Glacier Country give groups additional mediums to explore the land.

And that includes llamas.

Llama Trekking in the Swan Mountains involves a guided hike for travelers who want to add something novel to their Montana vacation, according to the local DMO's Lucy Guthrie Beighle. "Llamas are an ideal hiking companion because of their calm demeanor and their strength and agility in the mountains. Alert and sure-footed, these beautiful Andean natives tote your gear with ease, allowing you to take in the stunning views of Glacier Country," she says. With tours available for all fitness levels, explorers can take an evening sunset hike, book a multi-day adventure, or customize a llama trek (and that can include llama yoga).

Sun Tours offers interpretive excursions through Glacier National Park with Blackfeet guides. Air-conditioned coaches with large windows head along Going-to-the-Sun Road through the area known as the Backbone of the World while groups learn about Blackfeet history, culture, and the tribe's modern-day lifestyles. Group rates and private tours are available, and tours depart from the east and west ends of the park.

Far West Boat Tours takes cruisers across Flathead Lake, the largest freshwater lake west

of the Mississippi and naturally carved out by glaciers. "Charters are available for private groups with customized departures and travel routes, such as cruising around Wild Horse Island, home to bighorn sheep, mule deer, and wild horses," Beighle says. The Mission and Swan mountain ranges are the backdrop to natural islands around the lake, where Flathead Indians were once known to hide their horses from thieves.



WESTERN MONTANA'S GLACIER COUNTRY

Llama trek

For more information, contact Montana's Glacier Country's Tourism Sales Manager Debbie Picard at gcsales@glaciermt.com or go to glaciermt.com.

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A cultural crossing

The North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance, a coming-together of seven tribal nations, has joined forces with NTA-member North Dakota Tourism Division to perpetuate and celebrate native culture.

“The Alliance provides education and

discussion on preserving their history, music, language, and environment,” says the state DMO’s Deanne Cunningham. “The tribal nations are an important part of North Dakota’s history. We have approximately 30,000 Native Americans that call our state home.”

The collaboration has resulted in more group travel product, which includes an earthlodge experience where travelers can see tribal dances, hear authentic drum music, visit the tribe’s garden, and sample the cuisine.

“Near the earthlodge village, there is now a waterpark for student groups and a large cruising boat that can take up to 100 people out on Lake Sakakawea,” Cunningham says. “A visit to the overlook of Crows Flies High offers several interpretive panels and views of the lake and the Four Bears Bridge.”

Here are a few other attractions that illuminate the legacy and lives of the Plains Indians.

Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site This group of village ruins contains sites of trade, socialization, and battle more than 11,000 years ago among Northern Plains tribes (as well as where Lewis and Clark met Sakakawea) and is now home to a modern museum and visitor center.

The Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center and Fort Mandan The center offers an immersive journey through the Corps of Discovery. A replica of Lewis and Clark’s famed winter home makes up Fort Mandan, which stands near the Mandan Villages, the site where the explorers traded goods for protection and knowledge during the early 19th-century expedition.

Fort Totten State Historical Site The former military post, Indian healthcare facility, and reservation school is now home to an interpretive center, museum, and historical inn. And although the site’s Devils Lake harbors legends of drowned warriors and water monsters, it’s now a fantastic fishing destination.

For more information, contact Cunningham at decunningham@nd.gov or go to ndtourism.com.



NORTH DAKOTA TOURISM DIVISION

The Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center

Wyoming State Capitol restoration project completed in 2019!

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Keep your eyes peeled for big potatoes

While Idaho is packed full of extreme adventure—from heli-skiing to jet boating—there are lots of leisure activities that allow travelers to enjoy the state's natural beauty (and quirks) from a tranquil spot.

Sleigh rides are a way to experience Idaho's winter wonderland without skis or snowshoes. At Hap and Florence Points Sleigh Rides in Donnelly, hour-long trips by horse-drawn sleigh canter along the scenic Gold Fork River and bring guests up close to wild elk. At Linn Canyon Ranch in Victor, groups ride through the snowy fields with views of the Teton range and can enjoy warm drinks by the fire and a gourmet dinner upon returning to the lodge.

Roadside attractions can be explored in an unhurried fashion—and there are some unique ones to find. In Cottonwood is the Dog Bark Park Inn, a beagle-shaped bed-and-breakfast and state landmark. There are more dog-shaped treasures to see there, like oversized chainsaw dog carvings by resident artists in the Dog Bark Park. In Driggs, find the Spud Drive-In, a Teton Valley historical landmark where visitors can see a movie under the stars at a classic drive-in theater. And there's a giant potato on-site.

Hot springs are common in Idaho. At Kirkham Hot Springs in Lowman, travelers will find soaking pools and waterfalls on the South Fork of the Payette River near a popular campground. Lava Hot Springs, a beautiful and well-known spot,

has five pools filled with over 2.5 million gallons of hot mineral water at varying temperatures. The facility also has an outdoor Olympic-sized swimming pool and indoor aquatic center.

For more information, contact the Idaho Division of Tourism Development's Amy Alpers at amy.alpers@tourism.idaho.gov or go to visitidaho.org.



JOSH MYERS/TREKING PHOTOGRAPHY

The Spud Drive-In

A collage of images related to Cody, Wyoming, including a cowboy on a horse, a waterfall, a teepee, and a wagon. The central text reads "WELCOME TO THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE LIKE IT." with "WYO ★ USA" below it. At the bottom, it says "Cody THE GREAT AMERICAN ADVENTURE YELLOWSTONE" and "Plan your trip today at CodyYellowstone.org or call 1-800-393-CODY".

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Western Canada

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

Wascana's wow factor

Regina's Wascana Park traces its roots to the construction of the Saskatchewan Legislative Building in 1912. Shortly after the governmental facility's completion, the park was developed and the city gained one of its most valuable assets.

The urban greenspace, which is larger than Stanley Park in Vancouver and Central Park in New York City combined,

includes myriad things to do and see for visitors and residents alike. Four of Regina's main attractions—MacKenzie Art Gallery, the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, the Saskatchewan Science Centre, and the Conexus Arts Centre—are on its sprawling grounds.

As travelers explore the park, they can see dozens of memorials and monuments that recognize people and groups that shaped the province's history. The Walter Scott Memorial pays homage to the first Saskatchewan premier, who was in office when the Legislative Building was constructed.

Surveyor's Monument recalls the efforts throughout the years of those who mapped and developed the nation, and the Saskatchewan War Memorial is dedicated to the men and women who fought in World War I, World War II, and the Korean War.

The Queen Elizabeth II Gardens, Trafalgar Fountain, and the Waterfowl Park Display Ponds are among the park's natural assets. An extensive network of trails and waterways offer options for walkers and bicyclists, and kayak and canoe rentals provide a good way for paddlers to take in the scenery from Wascana Lake.

To learn more, contact Tourism Saskatchewan's Curt Koethler at curt.koethler@tourismsask.com or go to trade.tourismsaskatchewan.com.

Wascana Park's Walter Scott Memorial



WASCANA.CA

Know your rights

Since it opened in 2014, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg, Manitoba, has told the stories of thousands of people around the world as they struggle to gain basic freedoms. The attraction recently debuted the following three special exhibits that highlight human rights issues:

“Rights on the Job” (through October 2020)

Even though Canadian employees are entitled to a diverse range of rights in the workplace, many times those protections have been overlooked. “Rights on the Job” tells the stories of three groups—indigenous nurses, black railway porters, and uranium miners—that overcame obstacles and created positive change.

“Ododo Wa: Stories of Girls in War” (through November 2020)

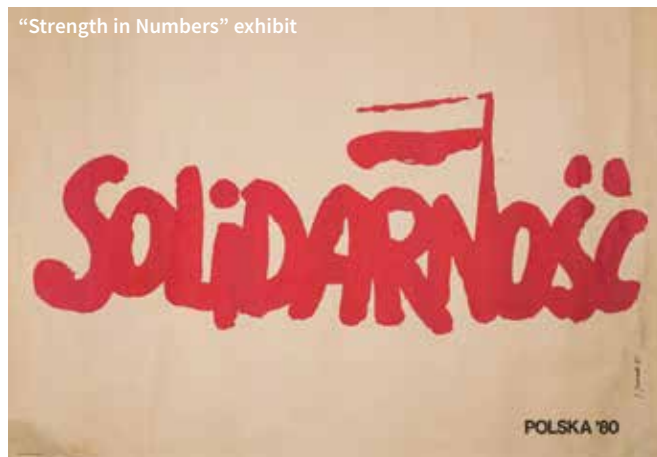
The stories of Ugandans Grace Acan and Evelyn Amony are the focus of this special exhibition. The two, who were among dozens of young girls kidnapped by the Lord's Resistance Army, were held in captivity for more than a decade before finding their way to freedom. “Ododo Wa” tells how the ordeal transformed these women into activists.

“Strength in Numbers: The Polish Solidarity Movement”

(through August 2024)

This new exhibit details the aftermath of the firing of Anna Walentynowicz at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk. The 1980 event, which was a key moment in decades of worker's rights struggles in Poland, sparked a mass strike that inspired the Solidarity movement and resulted in a major workplace reform.

“Strength in Numbers” exhibit



CMHR - MCDP

To learn more, contact the attraction's Carrie Goulet at tours@humanrights.ca or go to humanrightsmuseum.ca.



Autumn colors at Mount Adney

Yukon by season

Travelers heading to the Yukon can experience a vast landscape that is one of the few remaining unspoiled spots on earth. From its endless-sun summer days and autumn beauty to skiing and aurora-viewing in the winter, the territory in Canada's northwest corner provides signature experiences during all four seasons.

SPRING (April and May)

- Seasonal highlight: Return of migratory wildlife
- Activities: Wildlife viewing, golfing, fishing and camping, road trips
- Average high temperature: 7°C (44.6°F)

SUMMER (June to August)

- Seasonal highlight: The midnight sun
- Activities: Canoeing and kayaking, mountain biking, summer arts and music festivals
- Average high temperature: 26°C (78.8°F)

FALL (September and October)

- Seasonal highlight: Brilliant autumn colors
- Activities: Hiking, paddling, road trips, watching the caribou migration, early northern lights viewing
- Average high temperature: 7°C (44.6°F)

WINTER (November to March)

- Seasonal highlight: The northern lights
- Activities: Dog sledding, ice fishing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, hot springs, skiing
- Average high temperature: -13°C (8.6°F)

To learn more, email Tourism Yukon's Stephen Reynolds at stephen.reynolds@gov.yk.ca or go to travelyukon.com.

Lots of lodging in Alberta and British Columbia

Tour operators heading to Alberta and British Columbia have a wide array of lodging choices, thanks to their NTA supplier partners. Five member companies own multiple hotels in Alberta and/or British Columbia, and they offer a range of accommodations, amenities, rates, and special touches for travelers.

Atlific Hotels This major Canadian brand has 15 hotels in Alberta—the majority in Fort McMurray, Calgary, and Red Deer—and seven in British Columbia. atlific.com

Hallmark Hospitality An NTA member since 1998, Hallmark's list includes properties in Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver. A new-build hotel also is in the works for Vancouver. hallmarkhospitality.com

The Pursuit Collection The Alberta-based sightseeing provider manages seven properties in Jasper, two in Banff, and one near the Columbia Icefield. banffjaspercollection.com

PHI Hotel Group With expertise in hotel management and development, PHI Hotel Group has five Alberta properties and seven in British Columbia. phihotelgroup.com

Sandman Hotel The Sandman collection spans every corner of the two southwestern Canadian provinces, giving travelers 41 hotels to choose from. sandmanhotels.com

The list of hotels in the two provinces also includes five properties that hold individual NTA memberships: Brewster's Mountain Lodge (Banff), the Canmore Inn and Suites (Canmore), The Crossing (Lake Louise), River Rock Casino Resort (Richmond), and the Royal Scot Hotel & Suites (Victoria). 📍



Hallmark Hotels' Ramada Vancouver Downtown

Latin America

Six takes on local culture and customs BY PAT HENDERSON

The countries that make up Latin America are home to a treasure trove of heritage, history, and friendly people. As travelers explore these destinations, they can find a slew of UNESCO World Heritage sites—Machu Picchu and Chichén Itzá anyone?—as well as encounter the beauty of the Galápagos Islands and the peaks of the Andes Mountains. Here is a look at six NTA members that offer tours of these and other iconic places in their home nations:



JORGE CAZENAVE

Argentina

In-country partner: Cazenave Argentina

Company overview: Since 1991, the company has provided highly customized tours for groups and FITs that showcase every corner of Argentina—from the Mendoza wine region and the peaks of the Andes to the streets of Buenos Aires.

Sample tour: Nature-based itineraries in Patagonia often combine visits to the Andes Mountains for hiking and horseback riding with a trip to coastal southern Argentina to see the abundant marine mammals and beaches.

Country fun fact: Tango, both a dance and a genre of music, originated at the end of the 19th century in the Rio de la Plata area outside Buenos Aires.

To learn more contact Jorge Cazenave at jorge@cazenaveargentina.com or go to cazenaveargentina.com.

Colombia

In-country partner: Metropolitan Touring

Company overview: One of the most diverse travel companies in South America, Metropolitan Touring has ground operations in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. The company also operates excursions to the Galápagos Islands on its fleet of ships.



CC FLICKR/PEDRO SZEKELY/bitly/2s60vF1

Sample tour: The seven-day Golden Triangle tour includes three of Colombia's top cities. Along the way travelers discover the history and architecture of Bogotá, take in the coastal beauty of multiethnic Cartagena, and visit coffee plantations in mountainous Pereira.

Country fun fact: Coffee was introduced to Colombia in the late 1700s and grew to become the country's primary export during the 20th century.

To learn more contact Tom Pelizzaro at tomp@internationaldestinationmarketing.com or go to metropolitan-touring.com.



COSTA RICA TRAVEL EXCELLENCE

Costa Rica

In-country partner: Costa Rica Travel Excellence

Company overview: Costa Rica Travel Excellence provides adventure and nature-based tours that feature the rain forests, waterfalls, beaches, volcanoes, and colorful birds of the country.

Sample tour: The company's Ultimate Caribbean Rainforest Experience goes to both of the country's Caribbean and Pacific coasts. During their eight days, travelers will go rafting on the Pacuare River, check out a turtle refuge near Tortuguero National Park, and relax in seaside Puerto Viejo.

Country fun fact: While zip lining has been around for centuries—early courses aided transportation and were used for scientific purposes—the first “canopy tour” (commercial zip lining) was offered in Costa Rica's Guanacaste region in 1996.

To learn more contact Carlos Blanco at mercadeo@te.cr or go to travelexcellence.com.

Ecuador

In-country partner: Expedition Tours SA

Company overview: The tour operator develops itineraries for student and adult groups—big and small—that cover a range of themes, from ecotours and Galápagos adventures to archaeology and colonial cities.



EXPEDITION TOURS

Sample tour: The diversity of Ecuador's capital, Quito, is highlighted during a week-long program offered by Expedition Tours. Groups can learn the city's history, see monuments and churches, discover the rich culture, and enjoy local culinary delights during the tour.

Country fun fact: The Galápagos Islands are home to dozens of species of endemic animals, including giant tortoises, Galápagos land iguanas, flightless cormorants, waved albatross, and Galápagos sea lions.

To learn more contact Ana Maria Cordova Vallejo at operations@expeditionstours.com or go to expeditionstours.com.



Mexico

In-country partner: Grupo Meca Mexico

Company overview: During its 39-year history, Grupo Meca has offered guaranteed departures to all areas of Mexico, as well as fly-drive packages and tailor-made programs. The company also has itineraries in Guatemala and Belize.

Sample tour: The Mayas & Aztecs tour covers the lives of the country's early inhabitants. The journey begins in Cancun with visits to Tulum, Chichén Itzá, Uxmal, and Mérida, then concludes with tours of additional archaeological sites in Mexico City.

Country fun fact: There are 35 UNESCO World Heritage sites in Mexico, placing the country first in the Americas and seventh worldwide in terms of number of UNESCO-designated places.

To learn more contact Raynald Paquet at northamerica@grupomeca.com or go to grupomeca.com.



Peru

In-country partner: Domiruth Travel Service

Company overview: With offices across Peru and a multilingual staff, Domiruth is a valued partner for travel planners from around the world. The company has programs based around culture, archaeology, adventure, agriculture, gastronomy, and luxury.

Sample tour: Four Pearls of the South is a 10-day journey through the country's most mountainous terrain. True to its name, the itinerary highlights a quartet of gems: Machu Picchu, Pampa Cañahuas Reserve, Colca Canyon, and Lake Titicaca.

Country fun fact: Peru is home to the largest pre-Columbian-era city in the Americas, Chan Chan. Now a well-preserved archaeological site in coastal northern Peru, it dates back to the mid-9th century.

To learn more contact Martin Harbaum at mharbaum@domiruth.com or go to domiruth.com.



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A perfect eight days in Oaxaca

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BETH ENGEL, CTP

What an incredible experience my fiancé, Creigh, and I had in October with NTA-member A Closer Look Tours during their Day of the Dead (or *Día de los Muertos*) tour in Oaxaca.

We traveled in a group of 16 that included the company's president, Augustin Caparros, and his wife (Anne), son (Colin), sister (Theresa), and brother-in-law (Gabe). What a family to travel with to explore this beautiful part of southern Mexico!


We were able to experience firsthand the people, the food, the history, the art (and did I mention the food?) of Oaxaca.

Let me just say ... *moles*! These are sauces that are indigenous to the Oaxaca region. Mole (moh-lay) is a chocolate-based sauce with a fabulous rich, deep taste that goes with beef, pork, or chicken.

The Zócalo, or central plaza, in Oaxaca was teeming with arts and crafts, people, and sidewalk cafes. Everywhere we

turned we were met with color, parades, and beauty. Within the Zócalo is the Church and Convent of San Agustín, which is full of religious artwork.

Each day we were greeted by our tour director, Ivan, who was so incredibly knowledgeable about the region. We took daily trips to smaller villages in the state, which allowed us to experience the true Oaxaca. The artistry! From woven wool rugs and wood carvings to silver and gold jewelry, the abundance of artistic skill is awesome.

The warmth of Mexico truly comes through in Oaxaca, and I recommend that you put this tour on your list for 2020. And if you want to see more pictures, I'd be happy to share! 

Beth Engel is NTA's director of sales.



One of the most memorable parts of the trip was visiting Monte Albán. This is one of Mesoamerica's most spectacular archeological sites, and the vistas are incredible. It's located on a flattened mountain top, and its buildings are perfectly aligned in large plazas.



A Mexican cooking class with a renowned local chef was a morning adventure. We all cut, sautéed, and grilled—then were able to eat our creations. Held in the chef's home, this was such an authentic experience.



Día de los Muertos is a three-day event, typically celebrated Oct. 31–Nov. 2. It's a beautiful celebration of loved ones traveling from the world of the dead to return to visit the living, and cemeteries are adorned with flowers, candles, and personal items. We felt so honored to witness these incredible and moving tributes.



We enjoyed so many parades during *Día de los Muertos*. The children, full of dance and song, were the highlight. In the smaller towns, we were able to see a parade and then view an incredible display of memorials.



San Bartolo Coyotepec: This town is known for black pottery that artisans mold by hand without a potter's wheel, as they have done for nearly 2,000 years. I was able to bring back several pieces for our home.

COMMUNITY

NEWS AND UPDATES FROM THE NTA FAMILY

On the one hand, we can proudly say that NTA members conducted serious and significant business at Travel Exchange '19 in Fort Worth. On the other hand ...



NORMAND HUBERDEAU

Meet the Members

Alabama Travel Council

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

NTA contact: Patti Culp, president & CEO

Office phone: +1.334.271.0050

Website: alabama.travel

NTA member since: 1981

Why is Alabama such an incredible place to visit?

We have rich history surrounding civil rights and the Civil War. Two Alabama civil rights sites have been designated national monuments. The U.S. Space & Rocket Center with Space Camp is second to none in Huntsville. Foodies are in hog heaven all over the state, like at the Pizitz Building Food Development in Birmingham and in Mobile's downtown district. We also just celebrated Alabama's 200th anniversary of statehood.

What are a couple of your newest attractions?

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice with the Legacy Museum in Montgomery as

well as OWA, a \$500 million complex in Foley near the Gulf Coast.

What is one of your most treasured travel experiences?

I have two, and both were during NTA board meetings. The first one was visiting the Rockwell Museum and staying in the Red Lion Inn in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. The second was in Portland during Contact. Experiencing my friends' destinations is very special, and those two areas I will definitely travel back to.

Have you binged on any good TV lately?

I'm a Christmas freak. I watch the Hallmark channels all year long, especially the Christmas movies!

What do you like to do on the weekends?

Of course, I love to travel. I enjoy cooking and gardening; I have lots of indoor and outdoor plants. I am a huge animal lover, and I



have dogs and a cat that take up lots of my time. I'm a big family girl and love to spend time with my daughter. I'm also an Auburn University War Eagle!

For more information, contact Culp at patticulp.atc@gmail.com.

Introducing ... NTA's newest members

Windstar Lines Inc.

CARROLL, IOWA

Tour supplier

In operation since 1995, Windstar Lines is a charter bus company with deep roots in the tour and travel industry. With a large fleet and capable staff, the company has a steadfast dedication to the core values of safety, service, honesty, integrity, efficiency, accountability, and innovation, which have enabled it to thrive since its inception.



Heather Schulte

Charter sales manager
888.494.6378
heather@gowindstar.com
gowindstar.com

"I have been with Windstar Lines as the sales manager for five years. I like to spend time with my family and friends, golf, and travel, and my favorite destination is Cabo San Lucas."

Amish Experience

BIRD-IN-HAND, PENNSYLVANIA

Tour supplier

With certified step-on guides for farmland tours and authentic Pennsylvania Dutch cooking in the family-style restaurant Plain & Fancy Farm Dining Room, the Amish Experience is Lancaster's only designated heritage site. The attraction offers tours of the nine-room Amish Country Homestead and the attached one-room school. Visitors can also see "Jacob's Choice," an emotional show about the Fisher family and Amish history, in the on-site theater.



Lois J. Stoltzfus

Group sales manager
+1.717.768.8400
lois@amishexperience.com
amishexperience.com

"I love traveling the USA, and I am an avid scrapbooker, so my travels come in handy! I have six 'fuzzy-faced' children and one very patient and loving husband, Milt!"

Prime Tours

DUBLIN, OHIO

Tour operator

Lisa Busch purchased Prime Tours, a 23-year-old business, with a partner in October, and the staff is excited to take it to the next level. The company specializes in student, senior, and affinity group travel, both in the U.S. and internationally. One of its niches is celebrity tours, generally in Europe.



Lisa Busch

Owner
+1.614.766.5553
lisa@goprimetours.com
goprimetours.com

"While I love to visit and lead tours in Ireland, Scotland, and the Czech Republic, I tend to want to explore the more exotic or lesser-traveled. If it's underground or on Atlas Obscura, I'm in!"

NEW MEMBERS

The following list shows organizations that joined NTA recently. Companies that also joined the Faith Travel Association have an FTA logo by their name. To access complete information on each of these new members, log on to NTAonline.com and go to the member searches.

TOUR OPERATORS

CE Educational Tours

Lexie Jackson
Allen, TX 75013-0008 USA
cetours.com

Great Reunion

Chao Sun
Pomona, CA 91768 USA



Rainforest Cruises

Jeremy Clubb
Miami Beach, FL 33139 USA
rainforestcruises.com

Travel Eagle Group Inc. (DBA Festival Travel & Tours)

Robert White
Anaheim Hills, CA 92808 USA
europatoursyapaquetes.com



Zag Sports Inc.

Jeremy Meccage
Pennington, NJ 08534 USA
zagtours.com

Zen Travel Canada

Zhongnan (Bruce) Pan
Richmond Hill, ON L4B 3Z4 Canada
zentravel.com

City Sightseeing San Antonio

David Strainge
San Antonio, TX 78204 USA
citysightseeingsanantonio.com

Courtyard by Marriott Ottawa East

Monica Licari
Ottawa, ON K1K 4S3 Canada
marriott.com/yowoe

Denali Park Village

Linda Steiner
Anchorage, AK 99503 USA
denaliparkvillage.com

Fly African Travel Agency

Bethel Haile
Addis Ababa, 5325 Ethiopia

Hampton Inn & Suites Buellton/Santa Ynez Valley

Monica Bristow
Buellton, CA 93427 USA
buelltonsantanynezvalley.hamptonbyhilton.com

ilani Resort

Brittany Rodriguez
Ridgefield, WA 98642 USA
ilaniresort.com

National Museum of African American Music

Dionne Lucas
Nashville, TN 37219 USA
nmaam.org

Trans-Europe Express LLC

Paul May
Montclair, NJ 07042 USA
expresstorussia.com

Unique Global Travel

Cindy Li
Framingham, MA 01701 USA

Uno Restaurants LLC

Jennifer Pye
Boston, MA 02132-4902 USA
unos.com/groupsales

Vishni Destination Management

Dev Bhowani
London, NW6 5RP England
vishdm.com

DMO

Snohomish County Parks, Recreation, and Tourism

Christopher Jones
Everett, WA 98201 USA
seattlenorthcountry.com

ASSOCIATE

RegPack

Samantha Avneri
San Diego, CA 92101 USA
regpacks.com



TOUR SUPPLIERS

Chattanooga Skydiving Company

Justin Silvia
Jasper, TN 37347 USA
chattanooga skydiving company.com

NTA EVENTS

Save these dates and connect with new partners and destinations. For more information on these events, click the EVENTS tab on NTAonline.com



VISIT ANCHORAGE/ASHLEY HEIMBIGNER



Anchorage, Alaska
March 18-21, 2020



Reno Tahoe
Nov. 15-19, 2020



CC FLICKR/PETE JORDAN: btlv2jnfq



Washington, D.C.
April 1-2, 2020



Memphis, Tennessee
March 17-20, 2021



Cleveland
Nov. 14-18, 2021

Good show!

BY CHRISTEN M. ELIASON

A LITTLE OVER 10 years ago, I attended my first Travel Exchange: November 2009 in Reno. It was my first time in Nevada and my first work-related convention. I was enthralled at the whole affair, including all those appointments I had as a buyer. I have attended every Travel Exchange since then.

Having a full book of appointments can be exhausting, but ultimately, it is productive and fun. It's constant engagement with a good share of the convention attendees, and every seven minutes you meet a new contact!

Several new elements were groundbreaking at TREX '19 in Fort Worth. On Saturday night tour operators were treated to a BBQ and a rodeo at the Stockyards. While every Travel Exchange may not lend itself to a signature event that captures the heart of the city or region, this introduced Western culture with a bang.

Sightseeing tours are a good way to immerse yourself in your surroundings, and my colleague Ellen Turnbull and I chose the Stockyards tour. We were treated to a variety of experiences, including the Walk of the Longhorns. Before that finale we learned about cowboy culture and how the historic stockyards will be reborn as a retail and restaurant focal point. What a great morning.

I always admire the energy in my business appointments. I met with folks who went to school, studied, and got certified in their craft—well done! I, on the other hand, got lucky in my career. I learned on the job, falling into tour planning in



Christen Eliason

midlife after working in the less-stable Washington, D.C., halls of government and holding other jobs. My boss, Chris Babb, was born into the tour operator business.

Beyond presenting a good spin on their region, attraction, or tour business, the NTA members I met with showed a lot more: a dedication to our profession and enthusiasm in talking about what they came to present.

That drive and substance was evident in the Best Pitch session on Tuesday. They weren't high-tech presentations, except for our Whisper devices. International members simply telling us about their country—how and where to travel within it—made for a novel experience. Listening to their accents and zeal was amazing. It was, as we say, authentic. NTA will probably tweak this session, but please don't change the genuineness of this new element of Travel Exchange.

Likewise, the state and provincial Sales Missions were, for many tour operators,

a good way to round up our knowledge of an area and give us connections we may not have time for in our one-on-one appointments. Presenters at all the Sales Missions I attended put thought into what they did, and the cleverest was probably the Virginia Sales Mission.

As the operators sat in a circle, with a member of the state's DMO team behind us, we each held a wrapped gift that had initially been placed underneath our chair. As we listened to short presentations about each area, we were directed to listen for the words "left" and "right." Upon hearing either of these words, we passed the gift to the person on our right or left. While this might not work for all the Sales Missions, this approach helped get us around the state in 20 minutes.

In my other Sales Missions, I heard about new, themed itineraries and learned by listening to questions from other operators. It was all very helpful for planning tours.

So many other components of Travel Exchange 2019 were great, too, from the Icebreaker to the '80s dance party ... Pam leaving (sniff, sniff) and Catherine coming (what a great speech) ... Chairman Paul also leaving and new Chairman Jim coming on.

Thank you, NTA and Fort Worth, for Travel Exchange 2019. What a good show! ☺

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The Virginia Sales Mission

BOB ROUSE

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