

DELIVERING BUSINESS ESSENTIALS TO NTA MEMBERS

JANUARY 2020

Courier

Anchorage away!

Get set for an Alaska adventure
at Contact 2020

AMAZING ARMENIA
PAGE 23

PAGE 14

NTA STAFFERS' 2020 VISION
PAGE 48

ABOVE, BEHIND, AND AROUND NIAGARA FALLS
PAGE 20

Jara Haas near Anchorage, Alaska



CHARTER NEW POSSIBILITIES

Sign up your group for a bus charter today



BONUS \$30 CASINO INCENTIVE PACKAGE*

Monday – Friday Package consists of: One \$15 Meal/Retail Credit and One \$15 Free Bet Coupon
Meal/Retail credit can be used in any restaurant, a full buffet or shop at Mohegan Sun.

BONUS \$25 CASINO INCENTIVE PACKAGE*

Saturday – Sunday Package consists of: One \$15 Meal/Retail Credit and One \$10 Free Bet Coupon
Meal/Retail credit can be used in any restaurant, a full buffet or shop at Mohegan Sun.

Group Leaders receive an additional \$30 PACKAGE

Contact Stephen Olender at 860.862.8988
or solender@mohegansun.com or visit
mohegansun.com/charter to get your
next outing on the road today.

*In order to receive package, bus group must stay for a minimum of 5 hours. Packages and offer subject to change without notice. mohegansun.com



FEATURES



Flying high in Anchorage

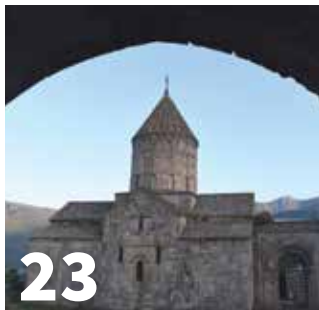
NTA will bring its tour operator retreat, Contact, to Anchorage from March 18 to 21. Check out the latest details on events and tours that will showcase Alaska.



City Spotlight:

Niagara Falls, Ontario

Courier's Kendall Fletcher got her first look at the famous falls, and a whole lot more, when she toured Ontario's Niagara Region.



Amazing Armenia

The Faith Travel Association's Kay Saffari talks about the religious treasures, rich culture, and unmatched hospitality that she and five tour operators discovered during the FTA product development trip in Armenia.

COMPASS

30 West U.S.

Alaska | California | Nevada | Oregon | Washington

35 Midwest U.S.

Arkansas | Iowa | Kansas | Missouri | Nebraska | Oklahoma

38 England, Ireland, and Scotland

40 Belgium, France, and the Netherlands

DEPARTMENTS

4 From the Editor

6 Voices of Leadership

Business

8 InBrief

Renew your NTA membership today

Register for 2020 Destination Capitol Hill

International visitation to the U.S. projected to increase through 2024

9 A social remix

Catherine Heeg offers 11 tactics to help you keep your New Year's resolution to tune up your social marketing.

10 'Connoisseurs of unique experiences'

Dan Hartman of Minnesota's Glensheen Mansion details how revamping tour offerings and adding unique programming led to an increase in visitation at the NTA-member attraction.

12 What's On

100 years of the Salzburg Festival

Boston's bountiful theater offerings

Outdoor exploration in Ohio's Cuyahoga Valley

Resources

26 *Courier's* Guide to NTA-member Casinos and Gaming Properties

Community

44 Meet the Members

Simon Shopping Destinations

American Christian Tours

Planet Hollywood/Buca di Beppo

45 NTA Events Calendar

46 Introducing ...

DoubleTree Suites by Hilton Disney Springs | The Holy Land Experience | Food on Foot Tours/Gourmet NY Tasting/Intro to NY | Objectif France | Topgolf | Walks

48 AfterWords

NTA staff members share their hopes, dreams, and resolutions for the year ahead.

NTA President

Catherine Prather, CTP catherine.prather@ntastaff.com

Editorial

Editor in Chief Bob Rouse, CTP bob.rouse@ntaservicesinc.com

Managing Editor Pat Henderson pat.henderson@ntaservicesinc.com

Writer Kendall Fletcher kendall.fletcher@ntaservicesinc.com

Writer Kay Saffari, CTP kay.saffari@faithtravelassociation.com

Contributors Catherine Heeg, Catherine Prather

Graphic Design Jeff Quire

Advertising

President, NTA Services Kami Risk kami.risk@ntaservicesinc.com

Director of Sales and Key Accounts Beth Engel, CTP beth.engel@ntaservicesinc.com

Senior Manager, Membership Sales June Calk, CTP june.calk@ntastaff.com

Account Executive/Western U.S. Kelley Burchell kelly.burchell@ntaservicesinc.com

Account Executive/Central U.S. & Canada Gina Rutledge gina.rutledge@ntaservicesinc.com

Account Executive/Eastern U.S. TJ Olmsted, CTP tj.olmsted@ntastaff.com

Senior Manager, Marketing Ashley Fish ashley.fish@ntaservicesinc.com

PLANNING AHEAD

To view the 2020 editorial calendar, visit NTAonline.com/advertising. NTA members can submit tour product information or editorial queries to bob.rouse@ntaservicesinc.com. And for advertising information, contact Kendall Fletcher at +1.859.264.6559 or kendall@ntaservicesinc.com.

► MARCH ISSUE

DESTINATIONS

Four Corners U.S.

Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah

Ontario, Québec, and Niagara Falls

Canada and U.S.

Africa

Greece, Italy, and Turkey

City Spotlight: Asheville, North Carolina

SPECIAL COVERAGE

Food and Drink

Historical Homes and Gardens

Guide: Sightseeing Rail

DEADLINES

Space: Jan. 3 | Material: Jan. 13

► APRIL/MAY ISSUE

ANNUAL STUDENT TRAVEL ISSUE

Student Destinations

Historical Attractions

Adventure/National Parks

Performance/Arts

Museums

Amusement Parks

City Spotlight: Huntsville, Alabama

SPECIAL COVERAGE

Guide: Operators Who Work with Student Groups

DEADLINES

Space: Feb. 7 | Material: Feb. 17

AD INDEX

★ New advertisers

Aon Affinity

Insurance Services ... Inside Back Cover
berkely.com

Blue Lake Casino & Hotel29
bluelakecasino.com

Coeur d'Alene Casino Resort27
cdacaso.com

Delta Air Lines Back Cover
delta.com

Explore St. Louis 5
explorestlouis.com

Fairbanks, Alaska—
Explore Fairbanks34
explorefairbanks.com

Fairfield Conference
& Visitors Bureau11
visitfairfieldca.com

The Huntington Library,
Art Museum, and
Botanical Gardens32
huntington.org

Maid of the Mist 7
maidofthemist.com

Major Marine Tours
& Harbor 360 Hotel31
majormarine.com

Meet AC15
touratlanticcity.com

Mohegan Sun Inside Front Cover
mohegansun.com

Niagara Parks,
Restaurants, Attractions17
niagaraparkstraveltrade.com

Palm Springs Aerial Tramway33
pstramway.com

★ Pathfinders11
pathfinders-tours.co.uk

★ Potawatomi Hotel and Casino29
paysbig.com

Ronald Reagan Presidential
Library and Museum13
reaganlibrary.com

Tulalip Tribes/Quil Ceda Village 3
tulalipresort.com



PUBLISHED BY NTA SERVICES, INC. Email: kami.risk@ntaservicesinc.com

COURIER (USPS 602270, ISSN 0279-4489) (Vol. 47, Issue 1) published nine times a year by NTA Services, Inc., 101 Prosperous Place, Suite 350, Lexington, KY 40509. Periodicals Postage Paid at Lexington, Kentucky, and additional mailing offices. Subscription rate is \$60 per year.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Courier*, 101 Prosperous Place, Suite 350, Lexington, KY 40509.

COURIER is the official licensed publication of NTA®, an international trade association of the packaged travel industry. Copyright© 2020, NTA Services, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way or by any means, electrical, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without written permission of *Courier*, except for quotations made for purposes of a review. All inquiries should be sent to *Courier* magazine, 101 Prosperous Place, Suite 350, Lexington, KY 40509, +1.859.264.6559. Additional subscriptions can be purchased by calling +1.859.264.6559. Printed in USA.

Advertising rates are available upon request. For a change of address, subscribers may notify *Courier* directly, by email or letter.

COURIER'S MISSION STATEMENT

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.



Courier is printed on 100% recyclable material



NOW ONLINE



NTACourier.com

ESCAPE TO A DESTINATION OF PREMIUM LUXURY

Indulge in Washington's premier AAA Four-Diamond resort with eight restaurants, a luxurious spa and world-class shopping.



33 MILES NORTH OF SEATTLE
888.272.1111 | TULALIPCASINO.COM



**Bob Rouse**

Editor in Chief
101 Prosperous Place, Suite 350
Lexington, KY 40509 USA
+1.859.264.6548
bob.rouse@ntaservicesinc.com

GATHERING NEW YEAR'S resolutions from my NTA staffmates for this month's AfterWords (see page 48) has led me to think about my own resolutionary war.

On one hand, I want to use the power of a resolution to improve my life and, you know, the world. On the other hand, I hate to fail. And lowballing an ambition doesn't count. So my battle boils down to setting a goal that challenges me yet is achievable.

Lose weight? Boring.

Be a better husband? Impossible.

Keep up with everything at work? *Unachievable*.

There is one thing, though ... I like to play around with words, you know, and I sometimes write in verse. They could become actual songs, but I don't write music, so they sit there, tuneless. Until now.

I hereby resolve to create songs. Maybe that means finding a songwriter. Maybe it's getting a computer program and, ugh, figuring it out. Maybe it's learning how to play guitar. I don't know, but I'm committing myself to add notes to my words.

In the meantime, I've got a magazine to show you.

Let's start by illuminating this issue's City Spotlight: Niagara Falls. Kendall Fletcher visited the area and went through a torrent of adventurous activities. It starts on page 20.

(BTW, after a year of occasional City Spotlight features, the



Courier team resolved to include one in every 2020 issue.)

Another city in the spotlight this month is Anchorage, Alaska, the site of Contact 2020. See pages 14–19 to learn what attendees can expect to experience at NTA's annual tour operator retreat in March.

Kay Saffari led a Faith Travel Association group to Armenia on a product development trip that opened eyes to a wonderful country. It'll open yours, too, starting on page 23.

In the Compass section, Kendall, Kay, and Pat Henderson take you on a whirlwind tour of member destinations and tour product in, respectively, the Midwest U.S.; England, Ireland, and Scotland; and the West U.S., plus Belgium, France, and the Netherlands. Those stories run from page 30 through 41.

Be sure to spin the wheel and land on our page 26 and 27 stories about NTA-member casino and gaming properties, along with a guide to all members in that category.

Finally, I invite you to turn the page and read heartfelt words of your new president, Catherine Prather. Her quarter-century (!) on the NTA staff makes her, literally, the best-prepared person in the world to take the helm and steer this association on a path of continued progress.

Catherine's many years of service belie her fresh approach and youthful enthusiasm for a big job. I've never known a harder worker, though. She's my friend, and I know she will succeed.

Hey, I might even write a song about her—and set it to music.

Read on,

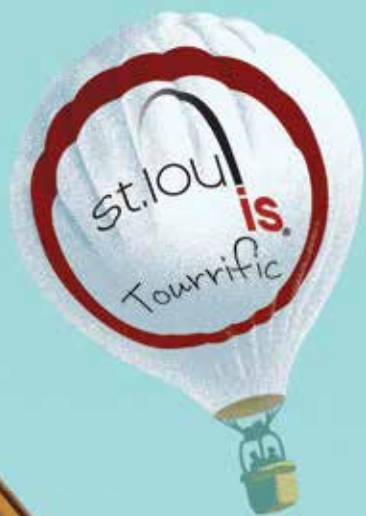
January *Courier* Destination Index

Arkansas 37	Minnesota 10, 11
Armenia 23–25	Missouri 35
Alaska 14–18, 30	Nebraska 37
Austria 12	The Netherlands 41
Belgium 41	Nevada 32
California 34	New Mexico 27
Connecticut 26	New York 36
England 39	Niagara Falls, Ontario 20–22
Florida 46	Ohio 13
France 40, 46	Oklahoma 36
Iowa 36	Oregon 30
Ireland 38	Scotland 39
Kansas 35	Washington 34
Massachusetts 12	

**On the cover:**

Jara Haas of Major Marine Tours takes a glacier leap near Anchorage, Alaska

Photo: Visit Anchorage



WHEN YOU EXPLORE

— *you'll discover* —

NEW REASONS TO VISIT

Your passengers can experience the fantastic views and vibrancy of the new Gateway Arch grounds and museum. Then they can go for a nostalgic ride on the Loop Trolley or a heart-racing thrill ride on Six Flag's new SUPERGIRL. Explore the rich history of blues music at the National Blues Museum or dive into the underwater world when the regal halls of our Union Station transform into the Saint Louis Aquarium. Whatever you plan, it's clear: St. Louis is here for them to discover. **Find more reasons to tour at explorestlouis.com.**





Catherine Prather, CTP

President
101 Prosperous Place, Suite 350
Lexington, KY 40509 USA
+1.859.264.6545
catherine.prather@ntastaff.com

I STEP INTO THE ROLE of president with a positive frame of mind because NTA is in a good place. I also recognize there are areas needing attention because we hear it from you—both the good and the not so good.

But that's OK. If we don't know something, we won't continue pushing forward or we can't make a change. We *do* listen to everything you say, and to that end, we're building avenues of engagement and benefits of belonging in many different forms.

Even though my past 25 years with the association have shaped my perspective, I have my eyes on the future. I'm very proud of NTA's heritage, yet I'm hopeful for its legacy to live on, and that's why I'm future-focused.

As I look to the years ahead, I see that NTA will be a stronger association because you will be stronger. NTA is an empty town without its community of members, so our objective—as we continue to evolve and better reflect the global marketplace—is to bring you not only more opportunities to connect and do business, but to ensure that these connections are increasingly more relevant and meaningful. So as we are building awareness and engagement, we'll listen to you about what is missing and how we can better prepare you for the future.

For one, I know that growing our membership is one of the most critical needs. I make a commitment to you that this is our top priority, so please ... make a commitment that supporting one another and doing business with your *fellow NTA members* is also a top priority for you.

That really is the only way we will find success in the future. Our future is together.

For NTA, that envisioned future is to be the most vital and vibrant global packaged travel association.

I know some are concerned about this long-term vision, which was affirmed by the

membership in 2013 and approved by the NTA Board in 2014. As I see it, the unifying factor is "packaged travel." That is our identity, unique to NTA, because we are the home for tour companies of *all sizes* packaging travel for groups—large and small—and also for independent travelers.

And with NTA focused on tour operator-packaged travel, we need to bring the world to these operators to package. That is what their customers want, and NTA has the obligation to give them access to a diverse range of destinations, experiences, market types, and product here in North America and from every continent.

I also recognize that the way travel is packaged, researched, bought, and sold has changed. With that, your business is evolving and NTA is constantly working to evolve to help you meet the challenges of the new marketplace. Once again, it goes back to finding success in the future ... together.

Thank you for this opportunity of a lifetime to serve you. I look forward to our very bright future!

Cheers!

NTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS*

Executive Committee

Chair

Paul Larsen
Ed-Ventures
pcl@ed-ventures.com

Vice Chair

Jim Warren, CTP
Anderson Vacations
jwarren@andersonvacations.ca

Secretary

Jorge Cazenave, CTP
Cazenave Argentina
jorge@cazenaveargentina.com

Immediate Past Chair

J. Chris Babb
The Group Tour Company
chris@grouptourcompany.com

DMO Director

Dave Nitkiewicz
Experience Grand Rapids
dnitkiewicz@experiencegr.com

Tour Supplier Director

Dan Flores
Maverick Aviation Group
dflores@maverickaviationgroup.com

Directors

Debra Asberry
Women Traveling Together
debra@women-traveling.com

Kelly Dean
Ottawa Tourism
kdean@ottawatourism.ca

Angela Harness, CTP
Tanger Outlets
angela.harness@tangeroutlets.com

Ashley Kingman
Travel Portland
ashley@travelportland.com

Cory Mace
North Central Group –
Hilton & Marriott Hotels
cmace@ncghotels.com

Fraser Neave, CTP
Wells Gray Tours
fraser@wellsgraytours.com

Chase Poffenberger
Academic Travel Abroad
cpoffenberger@academic-travel.com

Monique van Dijk-Seppola
Scandinavia Tours
monique@scandinaviatours.no

Jerry Varner
Making Memories Tours
jerry@makingmemoriestours.com

Christina Werner, CTP
Custom Holidays
christina@customholidaysonline.com

Director at Large

Lydia Fields
Delta Air Lines
lydia.fields@delta.com

*Election results for the 2020 board were not available at press time.

ELECTRICITY IS IN THE AIR.



COMING S2020N
SPRING



maidofthemist.com



#AnElectricExperience

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

Renew your NTA membership today

Get your new year started off right by keeping your NTA member benefits intact. By renewing before the Jan. 31 deadline, you can stay connected to the NTA community throughout 2020 with no lapse in your company's membership. You can pay your invoice in these ways:

- Go to ntaonline.com*
- Email headquarters@ntastaff.com
- Mail to 101 Prosperous Place, Suite 350, Lexington, KY 40509 USA
- Call +1.859.264.6540
- Fax forms to +1.859.264.6570

* Must be logged in as your organization's primary contact to renew online.

To learn more about how to use your membership to its fullest, email NTA's Todd Probus at todd.probus@ntastaff.com or call +1.859.264.6578.



Register for 2020 Destination Capitol Hill

NTA is working hard to make sure the association's key legislative priorities on travel-related issues are top of mind with U.S. lawmakers.

You can join NTA members and other travel professionals for Destination Capitol Hill, April 1–2, in Washington, D.C., to make sure the industry's voice is heard. The program combines a legislative day on Capitol Hill with advocacy training, guest speakers, and peer-to-peer networking. Visit ustravel/events/DCH to see a schedule and to register.

To learn more about NTA's government relations efforts, visit NTAonline.com/government-relations.

International visitation to the U.S. projected to increase through 2024

Late last year, the U.S. National Travel and Tourism Office released its updated visitation projections for the next five years. The report, entitled the "Forecast for International Travel to the United States," says the U.S. will welcome 90.8 million internationals by 2024.

After a projected 1.5 percent decline from 2018 to 2019, the year-over-year totals are predicted to rebound and rise at a steady rate through the end of the forecast period. From 2020 to 2024, the total goes up by a minimum of 2 million per year en route to reaching 90 million by 2024.

Canada and Mexico will lead the way—combining for an anticipated 44.5 million visitors by 2024—which is just under half of the total international arrivals. Between 2018 and 2024, Canadian figures are expected to rise by 14% and Mexico numbers to go up by 9%.

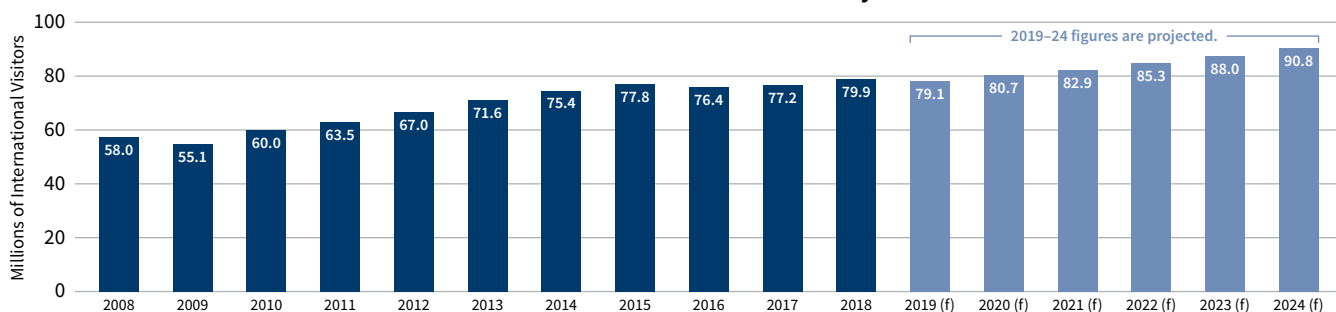
The increases between those years are higher for nearly all international markets outside of North America. Seventeen of the top 20 sending countries are expected to see a rise of at least 8%, with projected declines for the other three.

The largest uptick in visitation from European nations over the seven-year period is forecast to come from France, which will see an increase of 25 percent. Other key countries on the rise include Spain (15%), Ireland (14%), and Italy (13%).

Taiwan and China head the list from Asia, with projected 23% and 18% surges, respectively. Other significant jumps are expected from India (37%), Colombia (23%), and Brazil (18%).

The "Forecast for International Travel to the United States" is based on data gathered by the U.S. Department of Commerce in conjunction with Canadian and Mexican government sources. To see the full report, go to travel.trade.gov.

U.S. International Visitation Numbers and Projections



Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, ITA, National Travel and Tourism Office; INEGI (Mexico); Statistics Canada. ~ 2019 Travel Forecast (October 2019)

11 ways to remix your social marketing

BY CATHERINE HEEG



IT'S THAT TIME of year: Time to take stock of the good, the bad, and the ugly—then plan for a brighter future.

Social marketing is changing so quickly. How can we keep up with all the new ways to connect with clients, inspire them to travel, and then stay tip-of-tongue as they become our destination and attraction brand advocates?

Let's run through some tactics to tune up your social marketing.

Present profiles

What do your current profiles proclaim about your business? Do they tell your updated story and showcase your latest and greatest attractions and tours? Here are some quick details to run through:

- Review and rejigger all your company's social bios and "About" sections to reflect product additions, staff changes, and company vision updates.
- Re-imagine your visuals: cover images, channel art, corporate videos, and even website graphics.
- Ensure you're using all the available sections and tabs on your social sites that relate to your business. Is your Facebook "Products" section up to date? Have you added "Services" to your Facebook page? Are the "Showcase" pages complete on your company's LinkedIn page? And have you updated your YouTube playlists?

Survey success

Trends change as fast as the seasons, and you should keep up with your fans as they vacillate between social platforms. One day everyone loves Instagram; the next day it's TikTok!

You can send out a quick three- or four-question survey to better understand where your clients spend their time. Check out Survey Monkey for an easy (and free) tool that has great analytics.

Armed with the knowledge you'll glean from the survey, you'll be prepared to update your social strategy to catch your fans in places they hang out.



Analyze analytics

Understanding your successes and misses will help you continue to put out social content that hits the mark with your fans and followers. Don't miss these steps:

- Check out the available measuring tools in each social platform you use.
- Consider a deeper dive with third-party analytics tools for your social sites.
- Facebook's Audience Insights is a powerful tool that many savvy marketers miss. As you better understand your ad audiences (bit.ly/2P6CC3m), you'll be able to create more appealing ads that convert.
- Become a super sleuth by checking out the ads of others in our industry. Yep, this is now possible, and here's the navigation: On Facebook, go to the page of a company that you'd like to investigate, find Page Transparency (on the right side of the business page), choose See More, then Go to Ad Library, and filter as needed.
- Use your Google Analytics social tools to understand the navigation path of social-to-web visitors.

Rejiggered video strategy

While we don't have all day to network, adding several posts over a week is usually manageable. Keep in mind that all of your connections won't see every post you make.

- Emotional storytelling: Reworking video scenes by incorporating more stories and less selling hits the mark now. Check out the latest from NTA-member Travel Oregon: bit.ly/2Y9T1Z3.
- Small-budget storytelling takes the form of capturing authentic experiences. Refocus on emotions, fun, and solutions.
- Mix things up and post video on a variety of platforms, and don't forget about Facebook and Instagram Stories.

Remix posting strategies

Is your social editorial calendar in a bit of a rut? Do you always post specific things on specific days of the week? Mix it up! If you normally add a quick travel trivia video on Friday, post it on Sunday instead. Then check your analytics to note any changes in viewership, engagement, and reactions. You may find a new winning strategy.

Keep your fans and followers in the loop with a comprehensive advertising strategy. In our pay-to-play world, updating ad audiences, split-testing, and continually evaluating ad relevance scores (bit.ly/2kC1kPm) will keep your destination or attraction—or tours—top of mind.

As time flies ahead, don't get left behind because of a stale, outdated social strategy. Keeping on top of trends and ever-changing fan interests means your business will be earning more eyeballs and staying ahead of the curve. 📍

Catherine Heeg, an international speaker and trainer, focuses on social media marketing strategies for the tourism and hospitality industry. Connect with her socially and at cmsspeaking.com.

'Connoisseurs of unique experiences'

BY BOB ROUSE

RESTING ON THE SHORE of Lake Superior in Duluth, Minnesota, is Glensheen Mansion. The 12-acre estate is highlighted by a 27,000-square-foot, 39-room house, built between 1905 and 1908 as the residence of a prominent attorney associated with Minnesota's mining industry.

Opened as a house museum in 1979, Glensheen is owned by the University of Minnesota. The attraction's director, Dan Hartman, describes his role as "kinda like the chef and the CEO wrapped into one."

While the mansion is a study in early 20th-century craftsmanship, Hartman takes a very modern approach to managing the attraction. "We're connoisseurs of unique experiences," he told me when I visited Glensheen in August.

So refreshing is his approach, I followed up with some questions for the chef/CEO:



Glensheen Mansion

Courier: You changed from offering traditional guided tours to self-guided tours for most guests. How did that affect visitation?

Hartman: It immediately made Glensheen more accessible to more people, and it has helped us to nearly double our visitation. In particular, if you are hard of hearing or if you have a young family, a guided tour can be kind of a struggle. Now you can get tour commentary through an app on your phone. And we give kids a treasure-hunt book, which has been a game-changer.

Many leisure travelers or group tours have a schedule to keep, and the self-guided tour allows flexibility because it doesn't have a timed entrance. If you want to just stop by and tour the mansion, it's possible. In the past, we might have been sold out for hours.

Courier: You do offer tours, though, right?

Hartman: We may have moved our classic tour to self-guided, but we actually have more guided tours than before, and folks really enjoy them. We have created a series of them, ranging from our Nooks & Crannies tour to a Grounds Tour, a Photography Tour, and our Servants Tour.

Courier: What other changes did you make that might account for the increase in visitors?

Hartman: We have enhanced our gardens and general landscaping to fit more to the original design, and that has created a more breathtaking estate to visit.

Guided garden tours are available, and because of our growing season, groups can sample raspberries and veggies at times they wouldn't expect. We've got a unique microclimate because of the fog that rolls off the lake.

We have also done a significant amount of restoration and repair to the estate—to the tune \$6 million-plus. As part of that we have opened 15 spaces the public never had access to in the past. And the place just looks far better than it used to, from the Servants Courtyard to the West Gate wall and the tennis court. It is not the same place it was even three years ago.

Courier: How have you taken advantage of spaces on the property outside the home?

Hartman: We look at the estate as more than just a history tour. We now think of it as a great community space. At its most basic level, this environment on the shore of Lake Superior is one of the nicest pieces of property on the whole lake. So we now find excuses to throw different events across the estate. For example, the Winter Village event in early December attracts nearly 20,000 people and offers about 30 Christmas-styled cabins placed around the estate with some of Duluth's best vendors.

Even better, the event is put together by a local organization, Duluth Loves Local.

We try to break the mold. We set up a retreat in the woods, we organized a kayak tour with a boxed lunch, and we hold a Friday Night Beach Club—with beer and pizza by the shore.



Kayak tour

GLENSHEEN

TOP PHOTO: BOB ROUSE

We also do an outdoor rock concert series on our concrete pier that extends into Lake Superior. This brings paddle boarders and passengers aboard sailboats and yachts together with 3,000 people sitting on the shoreline, all listening to great local music. These are not your typical house museum events, and we are proud of them.

Courier: How unique is it for a historical home to be owned by a state university?

Hartman: It's pretty common. Meadowbrook Hall in Michigan is a good example. One of the best advantages is it provides us with a supply of college students who give our tours. They bring an energy and enthusiasm not typically seen in the museum environment.

Courier: Tour operators seek to build unique experiences into their itineraries. How do you accommodate them?

Hartman: We really enjoy orchestrating custom tours. For example, if a garden group contacts us, we set them up with our head gardener, who gives them an insider description of what it takes to make Glensheen so beautiful. Or if it's a group of architects, we can set them up with a tour guide whose specialty is the architecture history and highlights of Glensheen and Duluth.

One of the more popular benefits is allowing groups to have their lunch on our shoreline. It is not every day that a group can sit down by the shore of Lake Superior and enjoy a great local sandwich. In the summer months, few things can beat it.

We work with local businesses to bring some unique experiences here, such as kayak tours on Lake Superior that end up here in Tischer Creek. It is really quite amazing to kayak under our stone arch bridge. We also offer a sauna experience from Hiki Hut, where you take a sauna then jump into Lake Superior. January through April, we offer free snowshoe rental to anyone who purchases a tour. Snowshoeing the property is one of the most beautiful ways to experience Glensheen and has become one of my personal favorites.

To learn more, visit glensheen.org or email Hartman at dhartman@d.umn.edu.



pathfinders
RECEPTIVE TOUR OPERATOR
YOUR TRAVEL EXPERT IN
GREAT BRITAIN AND EUROPE

For more information visit: pathfinders.co.uk
 or email us at office@pathfinders.co.uk



California Fairfield

Unpack Once!

Make Fairfield the hub for your next group tour with many world-class destinations within a one-hour drive and bus-friendly parking at affordable hotels and attractions.



🍷 Jelly Belly Factory, 🍷 Suisun Valley Wine Region
 🍷 Craft Breweries, and more!



VISITFAIRFIELDCA.COM

Christian Wentworth • christian@visitfairfieldca.com • 707-399-2445

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

100 years of the Salzburg Festival

For several weeks each summer, the Salzburg Festival transforms its namesake Austrian city into one massive performance arts venue. The event, which will run this year from July 18 to Aug. 30, brings internationally acclaimed entertainers and 250,000-plus culture lovers together for more than 200 concerts, operas, and theatrical shows.

The festival traces its roots to a 1920 staging of Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Jedermann" on the steps of Salzburg Cathedral. That practice has become a tradition over the last century, and the play on Cathedral Square is the event's signature offering. A number of special shows will be part of the centennial celebration, including the one-night-only "100 Years of Jedermann" show on Aug. 22, new presentations of "The Magic Flute," and concerts by the Vienna Philharmonic.

The program always includes performances of Mozart's "Don Giovanni," which in 1922 became the first opera staged at the festival. Many other works by the composer, who was

"Jedermann" at the Salzburg Festival



CC BY-WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/CHRISTIAN MICHELIDES; bit.ly/33wvIDz

born in Salzburg, are also typically part of the festival.

While a number of productions are ticketed, many free shows take place during the event's six-week run.

For more information, go to salzburgerfestspiele.at.

Boston's bountiful theater offerings

"In addition to its well-known historical attractions, Boston has an incredible performing arts and theater scene that is really starting to swing and get some of the national recognition it deserves," says Stacy Thornton of the Greater Boston CVB.

Travelers can discover many aspects of the city's artsy side during visits to its theaters. Thornton says that, in addition to Broadway in Boston, the Blue Man Group and "Shear Madness" at the Charles Playhouse, the city offers many other performances and amazing venues, including the following three:



GREATER BOSTON CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Boston Symphony Orchestra's Working With the Masters program

Symphony Hall The world-famous Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Boston Pops have called Symphony Hall home for more than a century. There are a number of interactive experiences available for visiting student and adult groups, such as educational workshops and master classes that are part of BSO's Working With the Masters program. Each of those sessions is led by one of the company's musicians, artists, or staffers.

The Wang Theatre Part of the Boch Center, this state-of-the-art venue is a National Historic Landmark that boasts the largest capacity stage in New England. During a tour of the center's Music Hall, travelers can go behind the stage and see memorabilia, instruments, and photographs of legendary performers such as Bruce Springsteen, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, and B.B. King.

Emerson Colonial Theatre Established in 1900, this historical venue has debuted such seminal Broadway shows as "Oklahoma!," "Porgy and Bess," and most recently, the pre-Broadway world premiere of "Moulin Rouge! The Musical." During a visit, groups can tour the majestically restored building, which was reopened in 2018 by the Ambassador Theatre Group.

For more information, contact Thornton at sthornton@bostonusa.com or go to bostonusa.com.

Outdoor exploration in Ohio's Cuyahoga Valley

One of the newer installments in the U.S. National Park Service system, Cuyahoga Valley National Park includes nearly 33,000 acres of rural landscape along its namesake river in northeast Ohio. In 2020, the attraction will celebrate its 20th anniversary of becoming an NPS-managed site.

The park debuted the new Boston Mill Visitor Center in late October. The state-of-the-art facility is the hub of activities and programs, and includes displays that recall the time when the building was the Cleveland-Akron Bag Company general store at the turn of the previous century. The other welcome center, the Canal Exploration Center, has exhibits that detail when the building was a general store, a tavern, and a residence.

Active travelers can enjoy a variety of outdoor adventure. The park is home to more than 100 miles of hiking trails, which range from easy to challenging. The Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail—a compact-gravel surface that is fit for bicyclists and runners/walkers—follows alongside the river and offers great views of the surrounding woodlands.

Another popular option is taking a ride on the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad. The train runs Saturdays and Sundays



CC BY-NC-SA: DROST, BILLY/551UNSU

Cuyahoga Valley National Park's Brandywine Falls

from January to April, then adds more days and departure times for the summer and autumn months.

The Cuyahoga Valley's waterfalls are among the park's most photographed spots. Brandywine Falls is a 65-foot waterfall with multiple overlooks, and the two-tiered Blue Hen Falls is reachable via Buckeye Trail.

To learn more, go to nps.gov/cuva.

THE RONALD REAGAN

★★★★ PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY & MUSEUM ★★★★★



One of California's most beautiful and unique destinations!

For information on Egypt's Lost Cities & other special exhibits call 805-577-2704



Tour Through Air Force One 27000



View a Full Scale Replica of the Oval Office



Touch an Authentic Piece of the Berlin Wall

40 Presidential Drive • Simi Valley, CA 93065 • 805.577.2704

North to Alaska!

BY BOB ROUSE

CONTACT COVERS THE CORNERS—and expands them. Since 2011, NTA's annual buyer retreat has been located in every corner of North America: as far northeast as Québec City; as far southeast as Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia; and all the way southwest to Hawaii. Portland, Oregon, holds the flag for farthest northwest ... until March 18–21, when Anchorage, Alaska, hosts Contact 2020.

Tour operators who attend will get the whole package: New product ideas, practical information, and remarkable networking. And then there's Alaska itself, which is drawing a *lot* of interest from operators, according to David Kasser, vice president for tourism development and sales at Visit Anchorage.

"I have been extremely happy to have so many NTA members eager to attend Contact and see Alaska in the finest month of the winter season. We have already expanded our pre-event Fam space three times!" Kasser says. "There will be plenty to eat, see, and do, and we'll enjoy long daylight hours and mild temps."



Built for buyers

This conference is built for buyers. Along with the Fam, Visit Anchorage will provide educational outings that allow operators and agents to experience the area while also getting a sense of how they can package Anchorage. Other (indoor) seminars will focus on the nuts and bolts of business as well as on industry trends.

And then there's the networking.

In a setting that's more relaxed—with no business appointments—tour operators spend time with each other.

"We love networking with other operators to share business



Monique van Dijk-Seppola and Gordon Stearns share ideas at Contact.

practices and industry contacts, as well as our struggles, strategies, and new ideas," says Elaine Moulder, owner of Brilliant Edventures. "As a wholesale operator, we also look to create mutually beneficial partnerships, and NTA has always provided us with valuable connections."

The seller connection

Moulder also looks forward to connecting with tour suppliers and destination reps who attend Contact as sponsors.

"The relationships we make with suppliers and DMOs expand our knowledge and allow us to create additional itineraries, which helps grow our business," she says. "We know that suppliers and DMOs attending NTA events want our business, and we always say, 'It's not a matter of *if* we will visit you; it's a matter of *when*.'"

Sellers, too, enjoy Contact's unique format and opportunities.

"This event is a great way for smaller DMOs and suppliers to get some important face time with operators and other industry peers," says Jennifer Lazarz, the tourism and marketing manager for Gallup, New Mexico. "It helps to get to know someone outside of the quick-time window of appointments, and the discussions make an overwhelming industry much more manageable."

Sponsors also get together with other sellers, an aspect that Betsay Painter, with Lowcountry Hotels of Charleston, finds appealing. "I really enjoy engaging with tour suppliers so I can learn what trends they are seeing, and we address issues that affect all of us," she says. "Contact is one of the most enjoyable and productive events I have ever attended."

REDISCOVER ATLANTIC CITY

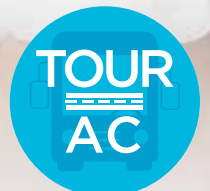
The Story Continues

Entertainment and excitement await in Atlantic City, including our world-famous Boardwalk, the ultimate in tax-free shopping, award-winning dining, live entertainment, and great attractions, like the Abscon Lighthouse, the tallest lighthouse in New Jersey. Experience an exciting getaway and create a lifetime of memories in Atlantic City.

Atlantic City Expert Heather Colache is available at 609-318-6097 or hcolache@meetac.com to make sure you enjoy Atlantic City as it was meant to be experienced. Call today to book your Atlantic City Experience.



Meet AC received funding through a grant from the New Jersey Department of State, Division of Travel and Tourism.



TourAtlanticCity.com



CONTACT PREVIEW

Anchorage rolls out the red carpet

Travel professionals don't mind when others do the planning—especially when the “others” really know their way around. Here are three things that the Visit Anchorage team is planning for Contact-goers.

Icebreaker

The opening night event is an immersion in culture at the Alaska Native Heritage Center, which is set on 26 acres with five lakeside village sites, each one representing the distinct native peoples across the vast Alaskan topography. Attendees will enjoy traditional and modern Alaskan foods, meet native artists, sample local microbrews, and maybe even hold a sled dog puppy for a photo they'll want to share immediately.



Sightseeing and educational outings

Details of Contact sightseeing and educational tours will be unveiled in January, but David Kasser already knows what to show off.

“The key motivations for most visitors to Alaska include wildlife, glaciers, aurora viewing, the culture of our first peoples, culinary (heavy on seafood), and the chance to absorb the natural, unending beauty of Alaska.”

Tour operators will see products they can include in programs during any season, not just the activities and attractions that are available in the summer, when Anchorage sees the majority of its visitors.

“Year-round travel to Anchorage is growing quickly because our iconic experiences are frequently a great value in fall, winter, and spring,” Kasser says. “Aurora viewing starts in late summer and continues through spring, and it's a huge incentive for travel. Add a roaring fire and warm Alaskan hospitality, and your client has had a stellar adventure.”

Closing event

On a private train ride with Alaska Railroad, you'll get epic views of coastal Alaska's snowy Chugach and Kenai mountain ranges along the swirling waters of the Turnagain Arm. As the historical rail cars wind along the stunning shoreline, retracing the voyage of Captain Cook, delegates can mingle their way through dining cars, feast on local seafood, dance to live music in the bistro car, sing karaoke in the club car, or relax in a comfy seat while the beauty of Alaska rolls past the windows.

Schedule at a Glance

Wednesday, March 18

Happy Hour at
Anchorage Museum

Icebreaker at the Alaska Native
Heritage Center

Thursday, March 19

Biznet:
The Opening Connection

Education sessions

Networking reception

Dine-around

Friday, March 20

Education sessions

Member forums

Sightseeing tours

Auction finale reception

Buyer networking dinner

DMO and Tour Supplier
Network dinner

Saturday, March 21

Fat Tire Bike Tour for GR

Education sessions

Educational outings

Closing event on Alaska Railroad's
Winter Party Train



NIAGARA
PARKS

Adventure

BEGINS HERE

ATTRACTIONS
CULINARY
GOLF
HERITAGE
NATURE + GARDENS
SHOPS
niagaraparks.com



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT A GROUP SALES SPECIALIST

groups@niagaraparks.com • 905.356.2241 x2



CONTACT PREVIEW

Host hotel: Sheraton Anchorage Hotel & Spa

Located less than a mile from the Anchorage Museum of History and Art, this downtown hotel features an on-site restaurant and rooms with awesome views of the city, nearby mountains, or Cook Inlet.

- Rates for tour operators and travel agents are \$99 per night.
- The rate for sponsors is \$119 per night.
- Feb. 15 is the last day to reserve a room and get NTA rates; go to ntacontact.com/hotel-travel/hotel.

Who knew GR was so fun?

Contact attendees can support NTA's Government Relations efforts the Alaskan way: with a fat-tire snow-bike ride along the Cook Inlet on the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail—it's a local favorite. The ride takes delegates from downtown Anchorage toward Westchester Lagoon, and they should watch for moose as they pedal along the snowy path.

Across the lagoon, a towering range of mountains fills the horizon, and Mt. Susitna, "The Sleeping Lady," might encourage riders to stop for a selfie.

Participants will start at 7 a.m. (lots of daylight in Alaska, right?) on Saturday, March 21. The cost to participate is \$50, and all the money goes to NTA's Government Issues Fund.

(If attendees prefer to stay in bed and skip the ride, they can still support GR from the comfort of their hotel room by "sleeping in for GR." The \$50 donation goes directly to the Government Issues Fund, and they can sleep a little longer before the last day of Contact.)

Contact 2020 also will include a popular annual event, "Bidding for Bulldog." This live and online auction, named for Tom "Bulldog" Jaffa, benefits NTA's Government Issues Fund. The online auction takes place March 11–20, and a finale reception that includes live bidding is set for Friday afternoon.



Take it from Laura



Laura McFadden

The NTA events team visited Anchorage in 2019 to scout out venues, go on sightseeing excursions, and sample the local fare. Laura McFadden, CTP, senior events manager, is eager to return, which makes her a good source of information—and encouragement—for *Courier* readers.

Q What can Contact attendees look forward to?

A Who doesn't get excited when they see a cute sea otter bobbing in the water or catch a view of an orca whale jumping out of the water? The scenic cruise with Major Marine exploring the coast line around Kenai Fjords National Park let us get up close and personal to wildlife, waterfalls, and glaciers.

There were plenty of "Instagram-able moments" that operators can put on their itineraries.

Q Is there anything that surprised you about Alaska?

A Seeing it in person made me realize what an expansive wonderland it really is! The flightseeing we experienced, which will be part of the Fam for buyers, soared over mountain peak after peak after peak. Awesome is an overused word, but it truly is that.

Q What will attendees do that's especially unique?

A One of the great benefits of Contact is that it's large enough to make many new contacts, but it's small enough to include really special experiences that larger conventions can't give you. For example, the closing event on the Alaska Railroad will open up multiple cars for our attendees to explore while taking in beautiful coastal views. And can I just say I'm really excited to get back there and dine on the local seafood? It doesn't get any better! ☺

Join us in thanking our Contact '20 sponsors! ^{so far}

HOST DESTINATION/CITY CO-PARTNERS



Visit Anchorage
Host Destination,
Icebreaker, Wednesday
Happy Hour,
Closing Event

PLATINUM



Explore Charleston
Buyer Networking
Dinner



**Lowcountry Hotels
of Charleston**
Buyer Networking
Dinner



Patriots Point Naval
Buyer Networking
Dinner

GOLD



Delta Air Lines
NTA's Official Airline



**Las Vegas Convention
and Visitors Authority**
Thursday Breakfast



Maverick Helicopters
Thursday Breakfast



Norwegian Cruise Line
Luncheon



Reno Tahoe
Saturday Breakfast

SILVER



**Academic Travel
Abroad**
Board of Directors
Lunch



A Closer Look Tours



Alaska Helicopters
Spotlight Session:
Power Hour



**American Music
Theatre**
Wi-Fi



**Aon Affinity
Insurance Services**
Contact Program



Arkansas Tourism
Lanyards



**Atlanta Convention
& Visitors Bureau**
Tour Operator Gift



Charlotte
Tour Operator Gift



Courier magazine
Tour Supplier/DMO
Network Dinner



CroisiEurope Cruises
Networking Session



**Deadwood Chamber
of Commerce &
Visitors Bureau**
Contact Program



Explore St. Louis
Convenience Station



**Graceland & Guest
House at Graceland**
Notebooks



**La Grande Roue
de Montreal**
Networking Reception



**Major Marine Tours/
Harbor 360 Hotel**
Contact Program



Memphis Tourism
Name Badges



Middleton Tourism
Tour Operator
Registration Bag Insert



Ottawa Tourism
Morning Coffee
and Tea Service



Tour Colorado
Contact Program



Tourism Yukon
Tour Operator Forum



Travel Medford
Hotel Key Cards



Travel Oregon
Hotel Key Cards



Visit Clarksville
Board of Directors Dinner



Visit Helena
Tour Operator Gift



**Wyoming Office
of Tourism**
Seminar

To sponsor at a future NTA event, please contact Abbie Dykes at +1.859.264.6566 or sponsor@ntastaff.com.

It's a waterful life

Niagara Falls overflows with adventure, activities, and beauty

STORY AND PHOTOS BY KENDALL FLETCHER



View of the falls from the Niagara Skywheel

ON A CITY TOUR through Toronto during last year's Rendez-vous Canada convention, our guide, Frank, said the area isn't a melting pot—it's a mosaic.

And that tour provided a hint of what I was about to see firsthand in the province's Niagara region.

I boarded a bus pointed south with our group leader, Kathy Utigard, and a group of 12 on the RVC post-fam trip. While I had never seen Niagara Falls before, I'd heard tales of barrels and beautiful sights. My mother-in-law had visited the U.S. side when she was pregnant with my husband (that's a funny thought), and she told me I would be simply wowed by the magnitude of the falls.

"You just don't realize just how big it is," she'd said.

For more information, contact Niagara Falls Tourism's Christina Marcotte at cmarcotte@niagarafallstourism.com or go to fallstraveltrade.com.

And big falls were just the beginning.

Our group members hailed from Los Angeles, Vancouver, Montréal, China, Mexico, India, and the Okanagan region of British Columbia. The bus rides were filled with the harmonic sounds of varying languages and accents—including my own Bluegrass vibrato—all singing to the tune of the road beneath us.

We stopped first in Waterloo, Ontario, just an hour and a half outside of the Niagara region at the St. Jacobs Farmer's Market. The huge, buzzing market can accommodate 40 buses with dedicated coach parking, and visiting groups receive coupons and maps.

At the nearby Waterloo Central Railway, we hopped aboard the train built over 100 years ago and traveled through Mennonite country, peering out the windows at farms with clothes on the line and lush purple lilacs in the fields. The company offers many themed rides that can be packaged as a group experience.

In the town of St. Jacobs, we visited

The Mennonite Story (a multi-media interpretive center) and the Model Railway—both are gems. The Model Railway was a large room of wall-to-wall model trains in every kind of set-up imaginable. I thought about how much my now 4-year-old would love it.

Before departing the next day, we visited the impressive Waterloo Region Museum and Doon Heritage Village in Kitchener. With a colorful, modern exterior and an interior full of the past, the museum housed multiple galleries of stories about the area's settlers. Just outside, we saw the heritage village—60 acres of living history showing life in the Waterloo region in 1914.

Then we headed to our next big adventure. And when I say big, I mean high up. We arrived in beautiful Niagara-on-the-Lake for our flight with National Helicopters. I was about to see Niagara Falls for the first time! You should know that I'm a little fearful when it comes to flying—but game for anything.

They put me up front in the helicopter (no biggie) next to the pilot, and we flew over the many vineyards of Niagara-on-the-Lake before we reached the falls. The sight was breathtaking, and it was there I learned that the water below the falls was even deeper than their massive height. A rainbow stretched over Horseshoe Falls, and tiny boats putted back and forth across the jewel-toned waters. The falls were majestic, especially from the sky.

Back on Earth, during a scenic drive through wine country, we learned from our step-on guide about the three wine festivals in the area throughout the year. The largest one is in January: the Niagara Icewine Festival, a three-weekend event of galas, tastings, and street events with more than 40 participating wineries. Christina Marcotte with **Niagara Falls Tourism** said winter is her favorite time of year in the area.

“To see the falls covered in ice is incredibly magical. There are 2 million Christmas lights (that are put up) around the parkway. And it’s the Icewine Festival and the gala,” she said.

Only 40 years ago, there were no wineries in the area. Now, there are 25 in Niagara-on-the-Lake because of the perfect microclimate (80% of the world’s production of icewine is made there), and more than 50 in the region.

The drive along the Niagara Parkway through the Heritage District and out to the countryside was simply gorgeous. The town has so many quaint shops, including one called “Just Christmas.” Niagara Falls Tourism’s Becky White said Winston Churchill called it the most beautiful drive in the world.

“It’s a good way to get a dose of nature,” White said.

After visiting three lovely wineries, it was time to see the falls from the ground.

We arrived at Table Rock Centre just in time to see another rainbow appear over Horseshoe Falls. The water was so grand and powerful that I felt simultaneously overwhelmed and at ease. I could see the American flag atop a New York building just over the horizon. What a beautiful sight it was, bringing together my home country with this land that welcomed all of us with open arms.

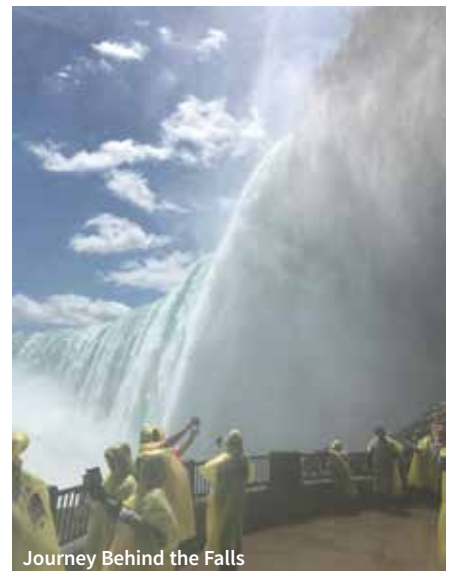
We dined at Table Rock House Restaurant—mere steps from Horseshoe



Sunrise view of Niagara Falls and Skylon Tower



View of the falls from Skylon Tower's revolving dining room



Journey Behind the Falls



Hornblower Niagara Cruises

Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours



Falls—and enjoyed great company, including Christina, Becky, and **Niagara Parks, Restaurants, Attractions'** Jennifer Thomas. Plus we had the amazing view through the evening hours. As darkness fell, the falls lit up bright red in support of the Toronto Raptors, then playing in the 2019 NBA finals. Throughout the year, though, groups can climb to the top of the tower above the restaurant and change the colors themselves, Marcotte said.

We then watched a massive display of fireworks over the water. It was one spectacular way to end our first night in the city.

The next day's itinerary was jam-packed with a variety of ways to see the falls. We started by riding the **Niagara Skywheel** in Clifton Hill, which offers amazing views of the area some 175 feet in the air. The Skywheel's enclosed gondolas are heated and air-conditioned year-round. Passengers can see the falls during the day and ride at night for views of city lights and the evening sky.

We made our way down to the dock via funicular (which, to my disappointment, is not a play on the word 'fun') and boarded a 700-passenger boat with **Hornblower Niagara Cruises**. It was about 50 degrees F on that early June day, and our ride into the falls was destined to be a cold one. With Hornblower alternating cruises with **Maid of the**

Mist from the U.S. side, we slowly boated past the American Falls, taking in views of the rocky gorge covered in lunching gulls. We then moved into the center of Horseshoe Falls, its veil of powerful water encircling the boat. I was right in the middle of this natural spectacle in its surreal glory, getting soaked, but I was unminding. We floated there a while, breathing in mist and experiencing the falls with every sense. It was a magical 20-minute journey. Hornblower also offers a nighttime fireworks cruise.

After a wonderful tour with **Journey Behind the Falls** (a walk through an underground tunnel to a landing just beneath the falls), we prepped for our adventure with **WildPlay Zipline to the Falls**. I searched my soul for some extra courage approaching the platform that rose 220 feet into the air overlooking the gorge. I'd wanted to try treetop zip lining, but I'll just say it: I was nervous as heck. But as we reached the top, the combination of exquisite panoramic views of the American and Canadian falls and the pep talks from my very adventurous travel mates, Jenny and Britta, had me pumped and ready by the time I was geared up and dangling on the edge.

In seated positions, we were able to go side by side. We sped down the gorge some 2,200 feet, and a refreshing sense of freedom replaced my fears. I could hear nothing but the laughter of my new

friends. I closed my eyes and felt the wind on my face—my arms wide open—and I just existed with those simple elements for one minute until we reached the bottom.

Hungry after that busy morning, we headed to the **Skylon Tower** for lunch. It was a clear, sunny day with blue skies, and we could see as far as the Toronto skyline once we reached the top. The falls were a beautiful backdrop to the lovely meal we had, and we were able to dine with Sales Director Anita Pang Hrepic. The dining room revolved, so our fantastic view was always changing and delighting.

Becky says if travelers have 24 hours to spend in Niagara Falls, she recommends the Hornblower cruise, zip lining, lunch at Skylon, time at Clifton Hill, and a winery visit in the afternoon. Most people spend an average of two to three days in the area.

"There are so many little gems of things," she says.

Our post-lunch adventure was with **Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours**, and we were fully warned (and prepared) to get wet. I strategically placed myself in the back center of the boat, as the people in the front absorb the most water. There was no real escape, though; it poured in and filled up to my ankles as we dashed upriver at 55 miles per hour through the beautiful Niagara Gorge and into some Class V whitewater rapids called Devil's Hole. By the end of the exhilarating 45-minute ride, I wished I'd sat up front. The company offers open and closed boat rides that leave from Niagara Falls, Ontario; Lewiston, New York; and, beginning this year, from Niagara-on-the-Lake. It also offers special rates for operators with groups of 10 or more.

On our last day, we enjoyed delicious food and beer at Niagara Oast House Brewers and shopped at the Outlet Collection at Niagara before saying our goodbyes.

Seeing the quaint corners of the Waterloo region and finding thrills by land, water, and air at Niagara Falls found me longing to return with my family. The places we visited felt welcoming, and with so much adventure, unique history, and picturesque landscapes, I've now discovered why the area is a popular spot for travelers—and why they keep coming back. 📍

A M A Z I N G A R M E N I A

Land of religious treasures, rich culture, and unmatched hospitality



Khor Virap Monastery near Mount Ararat
Below: Detail of a *khachkar* by Momik at Geghard Monastery

BY KAY SAFFARI

“SOMETIME THIS WEEK, an Armenian will treat you to a cup of coffee.” These were the words of our first tour guide in Armenia during the Faith Travel Association’s product development trip to the country in September.

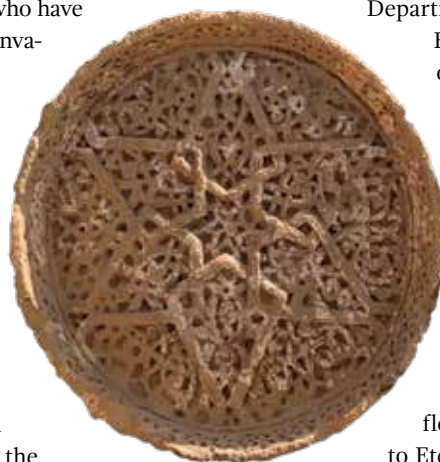
As our guide shared the story of a people who have suffered persecution, genocide, and various invasions throughout their history, she also highlighted the rich culture and genuine hospitality of the Armenian people. Despite facing challenges, Armenians have always been willing to welcome a stranger into their homes for dinner or buy someone a cup of coffee at a market or café.

And so began the journey for the five tour operators and me in this new-to-us country. The trip was organized by FTA member Solimar International and funded by My Armenia Program, a cultural heritage tourism initiative implemented by the Smithsonian Institute and funded by USAID.

Armenia lies in the mountainous Armenian Highland region between Europe and Asia and is bordered by Turkey

and Iran to the south, and Georgia and Azerbaijan to the north. Despite the unrest in two of the neighboring countries, Armenia remains one of the safest countries to visit, earning the best travel advisory rating by the U.S. State Department.

For the faith traveler, Armenia has much to offer. As the first Christian nation, officially named so by King Trdat III in the year 301 A.D., the country provides many destinations of interest. Travelers can visit sites related to two of Christ’s apostles, Bartholomew and Thaddeus, who journeyed throughout Armenia sharing the news of Jesus. Groups can also visit many monasteries in breathtaking settings to experience where Christianity took hold in Armenia and has flourished ever since. In addition, visitors to Etchmiadzin, the center of the Armenian Apostolic Church, can visit the world’s oldest cathedral as well as the adjacent museum housing some of the most important religious relics in existence.



Religious sites

Armenia is home to approximately 4,000 monasteries, many in remote areas atop mountains or carved into granite walls. The monasteries were purposely built in these places to provide a distraction-free environment for the monks who lived there, allowing them uninterrupted time for prayer and meditation.

Khor Virap

This iconic monastery has as its backdrop the magnificent Mount Ararat, the location believed to be the final resting place of Noah's Ark. It was here that the conversion of King Trdat III took place after Gregory the Illuminator, a Christian who was held prisoner here for more than a decade for his religious beliefs, was able to cure the king of an illness. We were able to descend into the actual pit where Gregory was imprisoned, now part of the present-day church.

Tatev

Because the road to Tatev Monastery is especially narrow and curvy around the mountains, the best way to reach it is via the Wings of Tatev, the world's longest reversible cable car. Constructed in 2010, it is 5,752 meters long (over 3.5 miles) and suspended more than 320 meters (1,050 feet) above the gorge. The ride takes 13 minutes and is narrated in three languages: Armenian, Russian, and English. The views from the cable car are spectacular, but those with a fear of heights might find this short journey quite challenging.

Tatev Monastery was built in the 9th century, and I found myself amazed at the thought of constructing these buildings in such a hard-to-reach location near the edge of a cliff. Services are still held in at least one of the churches.

Tatev Monastery



TAGUHI SAHAKYAN, MY ARMENIA PROJECT

Noravank

Noravank Monastery is a group of 13th-century buildings surrounded by soaring walls of red stone. This property includes the three-level Mother of God Church, cave dwellings where the monks lived, and an ancient church built completely underground in a cave.

The monastery also has an impressive collection of *khachkars*, or cross stones, many of them designed by the famous 14th-century Armenian architect and sculptor, Momik. These intricately carved stone "signs" were used to identify buildings being used as churches in the early days of Christianity in Armenia. Even after actual church buildings and monasteries were constructed, the tradition of the cross stones continued and still does today.

Geghard

The buildings that compose Geghard Monastery were built between the 4th and 14th centuries, with some of them carved into the massive stone mountain walls—all isolated and nestled in a green valley.

Because we visited here on Sunday, we were able to attend part of a mass. Two observations came to mind: This church, like all that we saw in Armenia, was rather plain, with a simple altar and little to no artwork, color, or stained glass. Also, Armenian churches are devoid of seating; all participants stand for mass, even though the full service lasts for about three hours.

Our guide explained that the plain, undecorated style of Armenian churches was influenced by the country's history. Because Armenia was often invaded and conquered by others, the practicing Christians simply did not have time to create ornate décor before the next invaders arrived. And with this tradition of simplicity, the people grew to cherish this style as a better way to concentrate on God while worshipping rather than focusing on distracting decorations, images, or art.

Etchmiadzin

On our last day in Armenia, we traveled to Etchmiadzin, considered the Vatican of Armenia and the center of the Armenia Apostolic Church. Although the cathedral was closed for renovation, we enjoyed a guided tour of the museum, which houses several important religious relics, including the spear used to poke Christ's side while he hung on the cross and fragments of Noah's Ark.

Spear relic at Echmiadzin



KAY SAFFARI



KAY SAFFARI

FTA PDT participants at Geghard Monastery. From left: Greg Varner (Making Memories Tours), Sirarpi Baghdasaryan (tour guide), Mirela Krstic (Select International Tours), Kay Saffari (FTA), Sarah Qeyros (Sarah Qey Travel), and Kelly Chen (ToursforFun). Not pictured: Mete Gurel of TripOTour.

Cultural experiences

While Amalia Stepanyan of ESI DMC Armenia agrees that Armenia's faith destinations are top-notch, she says the country offers so much more.

"Armenia is situated in the cultural, historical, and religious intersection between Europe and Asia. The country offers UNESCO World Heritage sites that have religious and historical significance, boundless natural beauty and breathtaking views, delicious food with national culinary traditions, rich cultural heritage, and hospitable people."

Our cultural experiences included the following:

Areni Cave

The Areni Cave Complex is an active archeological site where several important Copper Age artifacts were discovered. In 2007, a burial site was found, including a skull with a partially intact brain—the earliest on record. Then in 2008, archeologists discovered a leather shoe dating back 5,500 years, the oldest ever found. In 2010, evidence of a 6,100-year-old winery was found in the cave.

Momik Winery

After visiting that ancient winery, which is the oldest in the world, we enjoyed lunch and wine-tasting at Momik Winery, a small business owned and operated by a husband-wife team. Sitting on the covered patio of the winery building with sweeping views of the vineyards, we had a tasty meal and sampled four different wines, all delicious.



SARAH QEYROS

Gata Festival

We traveled to Khachik, a small town near the border of Azerbaijan, to experience the Gata Festival, which celebrates *gata*, a famous Armenian pastry. The festival included Armenian music and folk dancing and a wide selection of foods and crafts sold by local vendors. Several group members joined in the dancing and sampled the food, and all of us felt welcomed by the people of Khachik.

Garni Temple

This Greek-style pagan temple, built in 77 A.D., is one of the most iconic buildings in all of Armenia. When the country became Christian in 301 A.D., King Trdat III began destroying all pagan temples. Only Garni Temple was spared—at the request of the king's sister, who loved visiting this classic structure because of its picturesque setting in a valley overlooking a deep gorge below.

Garni Temple



Gohar's Workshop

Our group participated in a master class in ceramics led by Gohar, a local artist who is mute. Known throughout Armenia, Gohar communicates with her parents by writing, and the parents in turn talk to the visitors. We took a tour of the artist's workshop and had a chance to paint our own ceramic angels under the supervision of Gohar.

The best experience of all

Near the end of the trip, I decided to stroll through Vernissage, the open-air market in the heart of Yerevan. This famous market offers row after row of vendors selling handcrafted items, food, and clothing, and it's definitely a must-see.

As I passed by a stand with scarves and jewelry, one of the three women working there summoned me to try on a scarf. In her limited English, the young saleswoman, Ester, explained

how the artist, Marine, makes the scarves as well as the jewelry, which she crafts from brass and crushed granite. I ended up buying both a scarf and a necklace, and the four of us laughed and communicated as best we could, sharing photos of our



KAY SAFFARI

families as mothers do. When Marine suddenly jumped up and enthusiastically spoke to me in Armenian, Ester explained in English: "She says, 'I will treat you to coffee, my friend.'"

That simple invitation led to a wonderful time of sharing with these charming women and made me realize, despite the hardships of their history, what a warm and welcoming people the Armenians truly are. While I enjoyed the country's wealth of religious and cultural sites, natural beauty, and outstanding food, building bonds over a cup of coffee with these new friends was an unexpected and unforgettable experience.

And so the tradition of Armenian hospitality was extended to me, just as our tour guide said that it would be.

To learn about My Armenia Program, visit myarmenia.si.edu/en or contact Gabriel Seder of Solimar International at g.seder@solimarinternational.com. For information about tours to Armenia, visit dmcarmenia.com or contact Stepanyan at amalia.stepanyan@dmcarmenia.com. ☺

Courier's Guide to NTA-member Casino and Gaming Properties

Connect at Connecticut's casinos

Tour operators planning New England itineraries have two resorts in northeastern Connecticut where their travelers will find luxurious amenities: Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun. Groups can find everything they need at the longtime NTA casino properties, which each offer an array of experiences on-site.



Foxwoods Resort Casino

The basics: From its multiple hotel towers and casinos to its signature restaurants and shopping options, Foxwoods has become a major resort destination since it opened in 1992.

On the gaming floor: There are four main casinos—Fox Tower, Great Cedar, Grand Pequot, and Rainmaker—located throughout the property. The Rainmaker Casino was reimaged and opened in August. This new gaming space includes a number of new video slots, some of which are only offered at Foxwoods; a poker room; and an expanded race book.

Gastronomically speaking: With 35 restaurants, there is no shortage of options any time of the day or night. Patrons can choose between fine-dining venues, fast-casual eateries, and grab-and-go spots.

Top activities: Thanks to the on-site Tanger Outlets location, shopping takes center stage, and guests can browse at more than 80 boutiques and brand-name stores. For those seeking a few thrills, there are plenty of options at Foxwoods Extreme Adventures. They can choose from activities including a ropes course, going zip lining, and doing some go karting on a European-style indoor track.

What's new: Foxwoods debuted the Topgolf Swing Suite in 2019. The new area features two state-of-the-art simulator bays for golfing—players can take on 80 golf courses from around the world—as well as simulated baseball, football, hockey, and soccer games.

Annual festival: Foxwoods Beerfest (November)

Contact Foxwoods' George Yerger at gyerger@foxwoods.com or go to foxwoods.com.



Mohegan Sun

The basics: The 185-acre resort destination includes two casinos, 1,600 deluxe rooms, two world-class spas, a golf course, three entertainment venues, and more than 90 shops, restaurants, and bars.

On the gaming floor: Whether travelers choose the Casino of the Earth or Casino of the Sky, they can enjoy trying their luck at thousands of slot machines and table games, such as Texas hold 'em, blackjack, pai gow, craps, and baccarat. Additionally, and a high-tech race book shows daily live horse racing from across the globe.

Gastronomically speaking: From Michael Jordan's Steakhouse to celebrity chef spots such as Bobby's Burger Palace (Bobby Flay), Buddy Valastro's Carlo's Bakery, and Todd English's Tuscany, Mohegan Sun offers a range of dining experiences.

Top activities: Guests can enjoy a variety of massages and treatments at the award-winning Madera Spa, play a round on the 18-hole championship golf course, and do some shopping at the name brand merchants on-site. The property also features live entertainment and sports at 10,000-seat Mohegan Sun Arena, the Wolf Den (a smaller concert venue), and Comix Roadhouse.

What's new: After welcoming upscale dining-and-drinking spot Novelle in 2019, Mohegan Sun will add Tao Restaurant to its lengthy list of dining options. The menu at the new 300-seat venue will feature Pan-Asian cuisine.

Annual festival: New England Food Truck Festival (August)

Contact Mohegan Sun's Stephen Olender at solender@mohegansun.com or go to mohegansun.com.

New Mexico's native-inspired resorts

New Mexico's enchanting natural beauty and Native American culture are on display at Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort & Casino and Hilton Santa Fe Buffalo Thunder. Southwestern influences are abundant at both properties in everything from interior and exterior design to spa treatments.

Situated among the pines of the Sacramento Mountains in Mescalero just outside of Ruidoso, Inn of the Mountain Gods is the only AAA four diamond-rated resort in southern New Mexico. Guests can enjoy its 273 luxury rooms and suites, 38,000 square feet of gaming action, an award-winning spa, and nearby golf and skiing options. Wendell's Steak and Seafood—the property's fine dining restaurant—features gourmet entrees, and Smokey B's serves Southwest and American favorites.

The Hilton Santa Fe Buffalo Thunder is a world-class spa and golf hotel that's located just north of the heart of New Mexico's capital city. Inspired by Pueblo architecture and décor, the resort's Vegas-style casino has hundreds of slot machines, numerous game tables, and a poker room. The Hilton property includes a variety of restaurants, the championship Towa Golf Course, and Wo'P'in Spa, and views of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains are abundant throughout the 587-acre resort.

To learn more about Hilton Santa Fe Buffalo Thunder, email Diane Hunter at diane.hunter@hilton.com or go to buffalothunderresort.com. For more details on Inn of the Mountain Gods, reach out to Charles Meeks at cmeeks@innofthemountaingods.com or visit innofthemountaingods.com.

Inn of the Mountain Gods



INN OF THE MOUNTAIN GODS.COM

Hilton Santa Fe Buffalo Thunder



HILTONBUFFALOTHRUNDER.COM



- Courier's Distinguished Dozen,
2019 & 2020



★★★★★

"Tribal Destination of the Year."

- American Indian Alaska
Native Tourism Association, 2019

Cultural Tourism

Immerse yourself in the stunning beauty and serenity of our premier resort and in the rich cultural experiences of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. For details about cultural tourism tours and events, including powwows, traditional cuisine, historical tours, storytelling, dance and more, visit CDAcasino.com/cultural-tourism.

Contact Dee Dee McGowan, Cultural Tourism Manager,
at 1 800 523-2464 ext 7415

37914 South Nukwalqwa, Worley, Idaho 83876
CDACASINO.COM | [f](#) [t](#) [@](#)



NTA-member Casino and Gaming Properties

World-class gaming, gourmet restaurants, and luxury spa facilities are just some of the things travelers can experience when they visit casino resorts across North America. Many of these properties also offer numerous amenities ranging from high-end shops and entertainment venues to conference facilities and golf courses. Check with each of the member partners listed herein about discounted group pricing and special programs available for tour operators.

On these pages, you will see a complete list of member properties that feature gaming. Information was provided by NTA members and was current as of Nov. 21, 2019. With this and all other guides that appear in *Courier*, members can enhance their presence. Contact kendall@ntaservicesinc.com for details.

CANADA

BRITISH COLUMBIA

River Rock Casino Resort

Lyra Attolba
8811 River Road
Richmond, BC V6X 3P8
+1.604.247.8911
lattolba@riverrock.com
riverrock.com

QUÉBEC

Québec's Casinos

Anie Beauchamp
500 Sherbrooke St. West, 15th Floor
Montréal, QC H3A 3G6
+1.514.392.0909 (2629)
anie.beauchamp@casino.qc.ca
casinos.lotoquebec.com

UNITED STATES

ARIZONA

Desert Diamond Casino Hotel

Denys Marquez
7350 South Nogales Highway
Tucson, AZ 85756
+1.520.342.3025
dmarquez@ddcaz.com
ddcaz.com

CALIFORNIA

Blue Lake Casino & Hotel

Lisa Corral
777 Casino Way
Blue Lake, CA 95525
+1.707.668.9770 (2702)
lcrral@bluelakecasino.com
bluelakecasino.com

Fantasy Springs Resort Casino

Juliett Valencia
84-245 Indio Springs Parkway
Indio, CA 92203-3405
+1.760.238.5613
jvalencia@fantasysprings.net
fantasyspringsresort.com

The Hotel at Black Oak Casino Resort

Amanda Silacci
19398 Tuolumne Road North
Tuolumne, CA 95379
+1.209.928.9520
asilacci@blackoakcasino.com
blackoakcasino.com

Tachi Palace Hotel & Casino

Norma Schaefer
17225 Jersey Ave.
Lemoore, CA 93245-9760
+1.559.925.7653
nschaefer@tachipalace.com
tachipalace.com

COLORADO

Sky Ute Casino Resort

Jeff Lyman
14324 Highway 172
Ignacio, CO 81137
+1.970.563.1757
jeff.lyman@skyutecasino.com
skyutecasino.com

CONNECTICUT

Foxwoods Resort Casino

George Yerger
Route 2, P.O. Box 3777
Mashantucket, CT 06338
+1.860.312.7010
gyerger@foxwoods.com
foxwoods.com

Mohegan Sun

Stephen Olender
1 Mohegan Sun Blvd.
Uncasville, CT 06382-1355
+1.860.862.8988
solender@mohegansun.com
mohegansun.com

IDAHO

Coeur d'Alene Casino Resort

Dee Dee McGowan
37914 S. Nukwalqw
Worley, ID 83876
+1.208.769.2663
wmcgowan@cdacasinom.com
cdacasinom.com

ILLINOIS

Jumer's Casino & Hotel

Hollie Myers
777 Jumers Drive
Rock Island, IL 61201-7606
+1.309.756.4679
holliem@jumerscri.com
jumerscasino.com

IOWA

Meskwaki Bingo Casino Hotel

Diane Blomme
1504 305th St.
Tama, IA 52339-9697
+1.641.484.1494
dblomme@meskwaki.com
meskwaki.com

KENTUCKY

Red Mile

Mary Catherine Jones
P.O. Box 420, 847 S. Broadway
Lexington, KY 40585
+1.859.255.0752
mary.white@redmile.biz
redmileky.com

MICHIGAN

Island Resort & Casino

Cody Meshigaud
P.O. Box 351, W. 399 Highway 2 & 41
Harris, MI 49845
+1.906.723.2121
cmeshigaud@islandresortandcasino.com
islandresortandcasino.com

MINNESOTA

Mystic Lake Casino Hotel

Heidi Keyho
2400 Mystic Lake Blvd.
Prior Lake, MN 55372
+1.952.403.5344
heidi.keyho@mysticlake.com
mysticlake.com

Treasure Island Resort & Casino

Carla Nygaard
P.O. Box 75
Red Wing, MN 55066-0075
+1.651.385.2716
carla.nygaard@ticasino.com
treasureislandcasino.com

MISSISSIPPI

Beau Rivage by MGM Resorts International

Linda Spruill
875 Beach Blvd.
Biloxi, MS 39530-4241
+1.228.386.7171
lspruill@beaurivage.com
beaurivage.com

NEVADA

Atlantis Casino Resort Spa

Fei Kass
3800 South Virginia St.
Reno, NV 89502-6005
+1.775.824.4400
fei.kass@atlantiscasino.com
atlantiscasino.com

Boyd Gaming Corporation

Chris Carlson
5111 Boulder Highway
Las Vegas, NV 89122
+1.702.454.8137
chriscarlson@boydgaming.com
boydgaming.com

Caesars Entertainment

LaTanya Pritchett
3655 Las Vegas Blvd. S
Las Vegas, NV 89109
+1.702.946.7643
lpritchett@caesars.com
caesars.com

Four Queens Hotel & Casino

Pamela Dreyer
202 Fremont St.
Las Vegas, NV 89101-5606
+1.702.385.4011 (3070)
pdreyer@tlccasinos.com
fourqueens.com

Mesquite Gaming

Petra Jones
950 West Mesquite Blvd.
Mesquite, NV 89027-5204
+1.702.346.6800 (6890)
pjones@mesquitgaming.com
mesquitgaming.com

Montbleu Resort Casino & Spa

Anna Soto-Vopalensky
55 U.S. Highway 50
Lake Tahoe, NV 89449
+1.775.586.2077
avopalensky@montbleuresort.com
montbleuresort.com

Nugget Casino Resort

Andrew Reno
1100 Nugget Ave.
Sparks, NV 89431
+1.775.356.3347
andrew.reno@marnellgaming.com
nuggetcasinoresort.com

The Row, Circus Reno, Eldorado & Silver Legacy

Kimberley Thorndike
407 N. Virginia St.
Reno, NV 89501-1138
+1.775.325.7414
kthorndike@silverlegacy.com

NEW JERSEY

Resorts Casino Hotel

Meg Lewis
1133 Boardwalk
Atlantic City, NJ 08401-7329
+1.609.340.7715
mlewis@resortscas.com
resortscas.com

Tropicana Casino and Resort

John Happersett
Brighton & The Boardwalk
Atlantic City, NJ 08401-6390
+1.609.340.4366
jhappersett@tropicana.net
tropicana.net

NEW MEXICO

Hilton Santa Fe Buffalo Thunder

Diane Hunter
20 Buffalo Thunder Trail
Santa Fe, NM 87506
+1.505.819.2020
diane.hunter@hilton.com
buffalothunderresort.com

Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort & Casino

Charles Meeks
287 Carrizo Canyon
Mescalero, NM 88340
+1.575.464.7059
cmeeks@innofthemountaingods.com
innofthemountaingods.com

NEW YORK

Akwesasne Mohawk Casino

Michael Gleason
873 State Route 37
Akwesasne, NY 13655
+1.518.358.2222 (1103)
mgleason@mohawkcasino.com
mohawkcasino.com

NORTH CAROLINA

Harrah's Cherokee Casino & Hotel

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

OREGON

The Mill Casino Hotel & RV Park

Amy Bailey
3201 Tremont Ave.
North Bend, OR 97459
+1.541.756.8800 (2288)
abailey@themillcasino.com
themillcasino.com

Seven Feathers Hotel & Casino Resort

Dan Tappan
146 Chief Miwaleta Lane
Canyonville, OR 97417
+1.541.839.1161
dan.tappan@sevenfeathers.com
sevenfeathers.com

SOUTH DAKOTA

Deadwood Gulch Gaming Resort

Jo Anna Taylor
304 Cliff St.
Deadwood, SD 57732
+1.605.578.1294 (6939)
outsidesales@deadwoodgulch.com
deadwoodgulchresort.com

WASHINGTON

Emerald Queen Hotel & Casinos

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

Lucky Eagle Hotel & Casino

Ben Scholl
12888 188th Ave. Southwest
Rochester, WA 98579
+1.360.858.3107
ben.scholl@luckyeagle.com
luckyeagle.com

Tulalip Resort Casino/ Quil Ceda Village

Tracy Banfield
10200 Quil Ceda Blvd.
Tulalip, WA 98271
+1.360.716.6000
tracyb@tulalipresort.com
tulalipresort.com

Yakama Nation Legends Casino Hotel

Lisa Orloff
580 Fort Road
Toppenish, WA 98948
+1.509.865.8800 (5243)
marketing@legendscasino.net
legendscasino.com

WISCONSIN



POTAWATOMI
HOTEL & CASINO

Potawatomi Hotel and Casino

Lisa Pederson
1721 W. Canal St.
Milwaukee, WI 53233
+1.414.847.7982
lpederson@paysbig.com
paysbig.com

It's all happening at Potawatomi Hotel and Casino in Milwaukee. Open 24/7, this Midwest entertainment destination features over 2,500 of the hottest slot machines, nearly 100 table games, bingo, poker, and off-track betting, alongside seven restaurants, bars, a Topgolf Swing Suite, a 500-seat theater, Ember Salon & Spa, over 70,000 square feet of event space, and 500 luxury hotel rooms. Plan your visit today to experience the best in gaming and entertainment—all under one roof! 🎰

EASY ON/OFF FREEWAY ACCESS ♦ DOUBLE QUEEN ROOMS ♦ LIVE ENTERTAINMENT
♦ TOUR BUS FRIENDLY ♦ 4 RESTAURANT CHOICES - INCLUDING SUSHI BLUE! ♦

THE PERFECT BASECAMP TO EXPLORE CALIFORNIA'S REDWOOD COAST!

**BLUE LAKE
CASINO HOTEL**

CALL US TODAY:
1-877-252-2946 EXT. 2702
OR EMAIL US:
INFO@BLUELAKECASINO.COM

West U.S.

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

Your new partners in Alaska

The list of Alaskan tour supplier members of NTA grew in 2019, and two of the new companies offer specialized sightseeing tours: Lazy Otter Charters and Pybus Point Lodge.

Family owned and operated since 1994, Lazy Otter Charters provides boat tours, kayak rentals, and water taxi service around Whittier. The picturesque Prince William Sound is the



Lazy Otter boat tour in Prince William Sound

featured destination for the boat tours, which run from March to October. Passengers can see abundant wildlife and imposing tidewater glaciers as they cruise the waters of Harriman Fjord and other areas of the sound.

Both of Lazy Otter's vessels—the M/V *Voyager* and the M/V *Explorer*—can be booked for customized or private tours. The company offers guided kayak tours, or paddlers can use the rental option and head out on their own.

Located south of Juneau near Admiralty Island National Monument, Pybus Point Lodge is the base for world-class fishing for halibut, yelloweye, five species of salmon, and more. Anglers can choose between guided saltwater excursions or explore on their own. The main season runs from June to September, with July and August being the peak months.

The company also organizes ecotours that showcase the area's wildlife and natural beauty. Options include a day of exploration at Tracy Arm Fjord to view glaciers and icebergs, or seasonal waterfall and northern lights viewing tours. Cruises through the Inside Passage take guests into waters that are home to seals, sea lions, and humpback and orca whales.

For more information, contact Lazy Otter Charters' Kelly Bender at info@lazyottercharters.com or go to lazyottercharters.com, and reach out to Pybus Point's Darryl Bosshardt at darryl@pybus.com or go to pybus.com.

Enter sandman

Oregon offers a range of experiences and activities for travelers who spend time along its Pacific coastline. The Coos Bay-North Bend area is home to the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area, which provides unique ways to enjoy the mammoth sand mounds.

The park includes North America's largest set of coastal dunes, which boast peaks rising as high as 50 feet and cover a 40-mile stretch from North Bend to Florence. Here are three of the options for those seeking some sandy adventures:



ATV tours The most popular way to experience the dunes is on a dune buggy. Guided tours are available, as are rentals, and the largest riding area is between Spinreel Campground and Horsfall Road near North Bend.



Sandboarding Adventurers can hang ten on the dunes as they board down the sandy slopes. There are areas for both beginners and advanced riders, and a number of companies rent boards and other necessary gear.



Hiking Although it is a strenuous option—especially in some sections—trekking across the dunes allows visitors to explore on foot.

To learn more, email the Coos Bay-North Bend VCB's Janice Langlinais at janice@oregonsadventurecoast.com or go to oregonsadventurecoast.com.



ATV tour at Oregon Dunes

OREGON'S ADVENTURE COAST

BIG SIGHTS. BIG ADVENTURE!

KENAI FJORDS NATIONAL PARK | DAILY DEPARTURES FROM SEWARD

Major
MARINE TOURS

World-Class Wildlife and Glacier Cruises



THE BEST CHOICE FOR CRUISING IN SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA:

- Full and half-day cruises
- Informative National Park Ranger narration
- Salmon and prime rib meal served onboard while cruising

MOST POPULAR CRUISE:

- 6-Hour Kenai Fjords National Park Catamaran Cruise

CONVENIENT CRUISE & HOTEL PACKAGES:

- Pair any cruise with an overnight stay at Harbor 360 Hotel, Seward's premier waterfront hotel

CALL OR GO ONLINE FOR MORE INFORMATION | 907.274.7300 | » MAJORMARINE.COM

PACIFIC NORTHWEST & ALASKA CHARTERS



- Group Day Tours
- Airport/Ferry to Hotel Transfers
- Guaranteed Departures
- Over 75 Motorcoaches in Alaska & Seattle
- Group Services in Alaska Run May - September
- Year Round Service Throughout the Pacific Northwest
- Professionally Trained & CDL Certified Drivers

**PACIFIC
ALASKA
TOURS**

PacificAlaskaTours.com

**ALASKA COACH
TOURS**

AlaskaCoachTours.com

On the casino trail in Nevada

In 1941 when Thomas Hull opened the El Rancho Vegas—the first casino and hotel on the Las Vegas Strip—it is hard to believe he could've imagined what was to come. Over the past 79 years, the state's gaming facilities have been a boon for tourism, drawing hundreds of millions of travelers hoping to draw a royal flush and hit it big. The casinos of yesteryear have given way to modern-day megaresorts, including those managed by the following eight NTA tour supplier members:



Atlantis Casino Resort Spa

A \$100-million expansion boosted this Reno property's room total to more than 800. Guests can enjoy a treatment at its spa, which received a four-star designation from *Forbes*, and go swimming in the year-round indoor pool and the seasonal outdoor pool. atlantiscasino.com

Boyd Gaming Corporation

With more than 5,000 rooms at 10 properties across the Las Vegas Valley, Boyd Gaming provides a range of choices for travelers. Its collection includes three options in the center of old Vegas: the Fremont Hotel, the California Hotel, and Main Street Station. boydgaming.com

Caesars Entertainment

Long associated with Vegas luxury, thanks to its namesake property, the Caesars collection of Nevada resorts includes 10 in Las Vegas—including the Flamingo, Ballys, and Nobu Las Vegas—three properties in the Reno Tahoe area and one in Laughlin. caesars.com

Four Queens Hotel & Casino

Since 1966, the Four Queens has been a staple along Las Vegas' historical Fremont Street. The hotel has nearly 700 rooms and an expansive, remodeled casino floor. At Hugo's Cellar, guests can enjoy charbroiled steak, beef Wellington, and Queen's lobster. fourqueens.com

Mesquite Gaming

Mesquite Gaming has two properties—the Virgin River Hotel & Casino and the CasaBlanca Resort—that offer traditional table games, slot machines, and more than 1,000 rooms. Both are located in the city of Mesquite, which is an hour northeast of Las Vegas. mesquitegaming.com



Montbleu Resort Casino & Spa

Located on the Nevada side of Lake Tahoe, Montbleu appeals to the traditional gamer and the late-night club-hopper. The 433-room resort features distinct restaurants and nightlife venues, a 45,000 square-foot casino, and the award-winning Onsen Spa. montbleuresort.com

Nugget Casino Resort

The Nugget opened in 1955 as a coffee shop with a few slot machines. It has expanded over the decades and now includes two 28-story guest towers, eight restaurants, 110,000 square feet of meeting and special event space, and three live entertainment venues. nuggetcasinoresort.com



The Row, Circus Reno, Eldorado & Silver Legacy

Set in the heart of Reno, the Row includes three adjoining resort properties. Travelers can choose between the Circus Reno, the Eldorado, and the Silver Legacy, which combine to house thousands of rooms, dozens of restaurants and bars, and a range of other amenities. therowreno.com

**NATURE,
ART, CULTURE**

626-405-2240 | Pasadena-adjacent
Tours@huntington.org

THE HUNTINGTON
Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens

Washington parks offer evergreen scenery

From historical forts and trails of legendary explorers to mountainous landscapes, Washington is home to 15 National Park Service sites. As they roam the Evergreen State, travelers can check out these special places, including its big three: Mount Rainier, Olympic, and North Cascades national parks.



ALLENS PHOTOGRAPHIC

Mount Rainier Railroad



PAT HENDERSON

Mount Baker



CC BY-WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/NGRR-BTLY/10XGKN

Hoh Rain Forest

Mount Rainier National Park

With a peak stretching to 14,410 feet, Mount Rainier towers above the west-central Washington landscape. The park includes pristine old-growth forests and flower-covered meadows, and is a mecca for hikers and climbers. Travelers also can enjoy a ride along the Upper Nisqually River on the Mount Rainier Railroad, which is managed by NTA-member American Heritage Railways.

North Cascades National Park

Boasting more than 300 glaciers and countless jagged peaks, the park includes three units: North Cascades National Park, Ross Lake National Recreation Area, and Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. Visitors can enjoy a true back-to-nature experience and view an array of wildlife. The calm waters of Lake Chelan and Ross Lake are favorites of kayakers and canoers.

Olympic National Park

This sprawling park covers 1,442 square miles in the northwestern corner of the state. During a visit, travelers can experience Olympic's many different landscapes, which range from glacier-fed mountains and old-growth rain forests to miles and miles of windswept coastline along the Pacific Ocean. The UNESCO World Heritage site also is home to three Native American reservations.

To learn more, contact the Washington Tourism Alliance's Mike Moe at mike@watourismalliance.com or go to watourismalliance.com.



GROUP PACKAGES AVAILABLE

Dining, nature walks and more!
Contact Gabriele Madison for details.

760.969.4357 pstramway.com/groups

your GROUP ESCAPE

PALM SPRINGS AERIAL Tramway

Download Free Tramway Mobile Tour.

Available on the App Store and Google Play.

Palm Springs for students

BY KENDALL FLETCHER

Student groups can soak up the California sunshine in the Greater Palm Springs area and also take in myriad arts enrichment opportunities.

“The variety of art in Greater Palm Springs is diverse, from a world-class permanent collection and exhibitions in the Palm Springs Art Museum to striking murals in Indio and Coachella, as well as public art throughout the nine cities of our Southern California oasis,” says Robyn Gallegos, senior travel industry sales manager with the Greater Palm Springs CVB.

With three locations, the Palm Springs Art Museum is one of the most popular arts attractions in the area. Visitors can see a collection of more than 11,000 objects as part of its rotating exhibits. The museum’s foundation and mission focuses on modern and contemporary art, and that collection includes 3,000 sculptures,



Art projects at the Indian Wells Arts Festival

paintings, and prints, and 2,000 fine art photographs (plus 40,000 negatives). The museum’s most recent addition is the architecture and design collection: a display of drawings, textiles, furniture pieces and photographs that complement its

main “permanent exhibit”—the museum buildings themselves.

Student groups can take a self-guided tour in downtown Coachella to see the Coachella Walls, large colorful paintings that celebrate the lives and struggles of local residents—many of whom are immigrant farmworkers. One of the first murals depicts the 1965 grape boycott; others show the struggles of Latina women, and children who introduced breakdancing to a Cambodian village after being deported from the United States. Twentynine Palms also has many unique murals to discover.

Beyond the art museums, galleries, performing arts venues, and annual events—like the yearly Indian Wells Arts Festival—the area also can provide visiting students a lesson in history.

“There are historical museums that feature cultural art from the past and highlight how the destination was settled, beginning thousands of years ago with the Cahuilla Indians and then again in the mid-1800s as non-Native Americans began to explore the West,” Gallegos says. “While here exploring our art, students can also learn a lot about history, experience the flora and fauna of the desert, and visit Joshua Tree National Park, where they can hike to an abandoned gold mine that’s still standing from the days of the California Gold Rush.”

For more information, email Gallegos at rgallegos@palmsspringsoasis.com or go to palmsspringsoasis.com.



Be inspired by the light of the Aurora Borealis. Renew your energy under the Midnight Sun. Experience the warmth of Fairbanks—Alaska’s Golden Heart—and the gateway to Denali, Interior and Arctic Alaska.

 explore
FAIRBANKS
ALASKA

Call 1-877-551-1728 x3771 or visit explorefairbanks.com for free group tour information, itinerary assistance, visitor guides and maps.

Midwest U.S. COMPILED BY KENDALL FLETCHER

St. Joseph's colorful history and colorful windows

St. Joseph is a northwestern Missouri city with big offerings and unique stories—including some familiar history.

"Our big draw for groups is still, and hopefully always, our history, architecture, and stained glass," says the St. Joseph CVB's Jolene Dempster.

The city was the home of infamous outlaw Jesse James, and is also the starting point of the Pony Express.

"The story of the Pony Express has continued to fascinate Americans since Johnny Fry left St. Joseph April 3, 1860, heading west to Sacramento. The story is interpreted daily for visitors at the Pony Express National Museum as well as at the Patee House Museum," Dempster says.

Once the site of the original Pony Express stables, the Pony Express National Museum is an internationally recognized landmark. Visitors can see the original foundation, built in the 1850s, through a hole in the museum's floor. They can also explore cabins, pump

water from an original stone well, and see the Hall of Riders.

Being a pioneer city in Western commerce and trade, St. Joseph had a booming manufacturing scene that generated well-known products like Aunt Jemima Pancake Mix and Premium Saltine Crackers, and it also produced vast wealth.

The city's rich history is also evident in its beautiful architecture, and groups can tour the historical neighborhoods and see a variety of styles in mansions and churches, including Greek Revival, Craftsman, and Victorian.

The architectural heritage is also characterized by stained-glass windows. Many are in private residences, but visitors can marvel at the displays of art in several public spaces, including The Shakespeare Chateau Inn and area churches. The Tobiason Studio is the only remaining shop with commissioned glassworkers in the city. Its owners specialize in custom pieces and glass restoration, and they



Stained-glass windows in The Shakespeare Chateau Inn

offer classes and workshops.

For more information, contact Dempster at jdempster@stjomo.com or go to stjomo.com.

Pansies, plays, and putters in OP

With an award-winning culinary scene, trendy shops, and beautiful memorials, Overland Park is Kansas' second-most populous city and home to many enjoyable attractions.

Visit Overland Park's Content Specialist Theresa O'Leary suggests these must-visit sites for travelers:



Overland Park Arboretum & Botanical Gardens With 300 acres of more than 1,700 plant species—plus hiking trails and woodlands—this attraction provides an escape from the hustle of the city. "You'll find peace as you unplug amid nature," O'Leary says. Visitors can stroll across the arched bridge and the lily pad pond in The Monet Garden, just as depicted in the artist's famous painting, and also see the Ericson Water Garden and the Train Garden.



The New Theatre & Restaurant O'Leary says it's the largest and most successful theater restaurant in the U.S., averaging more than a quarter of a million in annual attendance. Guests dine on American cuisine while enjoying a Broadway comedy or musical. The company produces five shows a year, and group packages include special ticket pricing, event rooms for gatherings, and personalized service from a group sales representative.



Topgolf This NTA member—a 65,000-square-foot, three-tiered golfing range with climate-controlled bays—welcomes golfers of all abilities. Built for social events, Topgolf is an entertainment venue that hosts live musical performances and has a rooftop terrace with fire pits, a full-service restaurant, private meeting spaces, and three bars with more than 200 flat-screen TVs. It also offers group golf lessons that include drinks and appetizers.

For more information, contact the CVB's Mindy Lallier at mlallier@visitoverlandpark.com or go to visitop.com.

I'll have the 4th Street burrito

As the fastest-growing metro area in the Midwest, Des Moines has several highlights—namely its bustling, top-rated farmers' market and exciting shopping destinations, according to Des Moines CVB's Mandy McWherter.

The Downtown Des Moines Farmers' Market covers nine city blocks with 300 vendors from all over Iowa, attracting 25,000 visitors each Saturday from May through October.

"Groups enjoy strolling through the market, listening to live performances on four street corners, browsing fresh produce and baked goods, and tasting unique bites from food vendors, including the iconic breakfast burrito on 4th Street," McWherter says.

In addition to the abundant farmers' market and the soon-to-open and widely anticipated indoor public market, Des Moines is home to an eclectic collection of places to shop. Visitors can find something unique in the Historic East Village or Historic Valley Junction, and find great deals at the new Outlets of Des Moines and at the Jordan Creek Town Center, the state's largest indoor mall. Arts and crafts shows are hosted year-round at the Iowa State Fairgrounds, where handmade gifts and home décor are the draw.



Downtown Des Moines Farmers' Market

DES MOINES CVB

Shoppers can also peruse the place made famous by the DIY Network's "West End Salvage" show.

"For the experienced DIY enthusiast or antique collector, West End Architectural Salvage is an intriguing destination boasting four floors of salvaged goods, repurposed furnishings, and raw materials," McWherter says.

For more information, contact the CVB's Katie Stien at katies@catchdesmoines.com or go to catchdesmoines.com.

Oklahoma's ideal and idyllic destinations

While Oklahoma's metropolitan areas are bustling with fresh offerings, the Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation Department's Todd Stallbaumer says there are also gems to find in the state's outstanding rural communities.

Here are three he suggests—Pawhuska, Medicine Park, and Sulphur:

Pawhuska

"This northeastern Oklahoma town has seen a tremendous tourism boom in recent years, thanks to Food Network star Ree Drummond," Stallbaumer says.

Pawhuska drew more crowds after the release of "Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI" in 2017, now a bestseller and soon-to-be Hollywood film. The Osage Nation Museum, which shares the Osage Nation's stories through photo collections, art, historical artifacts, and cultural programs, was the first tribal-owned museum in the U.S.

The city is also home to the annual National Indian Taco Championship: a people's choice competition that takes place each October to determine who makes the best fry bread tacos. The event also features a powwow and arts and crafts vendors.

Medicine Park

"Built in the foothills of the Wichita Mountains along picturesque Bath Lake, Medicine Park was Oklahoma's first resort community when it was established in 1908. Shops, restaurants, and galleries fill its cobblestone buildings, which are made of rocks native to the area," Stallbaumer says.

A perfect example of the unique cobblestone architecture is the Old Plantation Restaurant, which opened in the early 1900s as a hotel—and was rumored to harbor a whiskey still in its basement during Prohibition. The restaurant pays homage to that history by utilizing the hotel's original rock bar.

Steeped in its Native American heritage, the town also puts on the Medicine Park Art Walk & Flute Festival each October that celebrates American Indian flute music and features a juried art show.

Sulphur

"This town in beautiful south-central Oklahoma is home to several great attractions run by the Chickasaw Nation, including the incredible Chickasaw National Recreation Area," Stallbaumer says.

The recreation area is secluded land near downtown Sulphur that offers lots of trails, camping areas, swimming holes, fishing lakes, and a chance to see wildlife, including bison and whitetail deer.

For more luxurious lodging, Oklahoma trekkers can stay at the Echo Canyon Spa Resort and enjoy its award-winning spa, lavish rooms, and the Baron of Beef restaurant. And if they stay in September and October, they can experience the nine-day Chickasaw Annual Meeting & Festival that celebrates the tribe's culture through traditional meals, art shows, stomp dances, and other live entertainment.

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



Chickasaw National Recreation Area in Sulphur

LORI DUCKWORTH, OKLAHOMA TOURISM



Agate Fossil Beds National Monument

Bluffs, Buffett, and Buffalo ... among other Bs

The Nebraska Tourism Commission's Micheal Collins says two of the organization's up-and-coming itineraries for this year are centered on some well-known native wildlife: birds and buffalo.

Buffalo, Bones, and Books "Western Nebraska is full of exciting group tour opportunities, especially along the aptly named Fossil Freeway (Highway 71) from Kimball to Chadron," Collins says. The itinerary features ranch visits, where travelers can learn about the High Plains Region's short grass prairie, and hand feed hay biscuits to buffalo. The journey is filled with important sites along the Oregon Trail, like Chimney Rock and Scotts Bluff National Monument. In remote Sioux County, the Agate Fossil Beds National Monument reveals mammal bones from the Miocene Epoch, and the adjacent Agate Springs Ranch houses fossils as well as a vast collection of Native American artifacts.

Buffet, Birds, and Beef This six-day itinerary begins with a Warren Buffett driving tour. Groups will visit many of Buffett's favorite spots in Omaha, including the renowned Gorat's Steakhouse. Stops at The Rose Theatre and the Omaha Community Playhouse for a behind-the-scenes tour are also on the agenda. When guests arrive in Grand Island, they'll visit Studio K Gallery for a painting session of the sandhill cranes and see the "Wings Over the Platte" exhibit at the Stuhr Museum of the Prairie. The experience will come full circle when they travel to Rowe Sanctuary near Kearney for a guided sunrise viewing of the cranes on the banks of the Platte River.

For more information, contact Collins at micheal.collins@nebraska.gov or go to visitnebraska.com/group_travel.

Rest your head in Arkansas

Where you stay during your travels is kind of a big deal, and these NTA-member, Arkansas-based lodging options live up to those expectations:

Doubletree by Hilton Fort Smith is connected to the Fort Smith Convention Center right in downtown. It's an ideal spot for business gatherings, with its 57,000-square-feet of meeting space, and it's a 10-minute drive from Fort Smith Municipal Airport. Guests can see a five-story waterfall in the center of the atrium-style hotel from their interior balconies.

For more information, contact Shannon Davis at sdavis@doubletreefortsmith.com.

The Lodge at Mount Magazine sits on the mountain's south bluff with views of the Petit Jean River Valley and Blue Mountain Lake. It also overlooks the state park system's most dramatic location for technical rock climbing. The lodge features 60 rooms, the Skycrest Restaurant, and a conference center as well as 13 cabins and 18 campsites.

For more information, contact Carolyn Jett at carolyn.barbee@arkansas.gov.

DeGray Lake Resort State Park is a 96-room lodge with 81 campsites, three Rent-A-Yurts, a 300-seat conference center, and an 18-hole golf course that sit on the shores of DeGray Lake. The resort offers sunset cruises, snorkeling, horseback riding, and other activities for outdoor lovers and, while indoors, guests can find a hot tub, a fitness room, and the Shoreline Restaurant.

For more information, contact Linda Hodges at linda.hodges@arkansas.gov. 📍



England, Ireland, and Scotland

COMPILED BY KAY SAFFARI

Hiking and biking in Ireland

With its lush green landscapes and inviting coastlines, rich history, and friendly people, Ireland attracts more than 11 million visitors each year—more than double its population. Greenlife Tours T/A Ireland Ways offers a unique way to experience “the land of a thousand welcomes” through its hiking and cycling tours. Vice president Tony Flynn explains that the tours allow travelers to see and experience the beauty of his country in a new way.

All nine tours are inn-to-inn style: Travelers walk or cycle to a new accommodation each night and, along the way, explore the true culture of each new Irish town they visit. While participants walk an average of 20–25 kilometers (12–15 miles) a day, the Greenlife staff transports their luggage from site to site.



The company’s most popular hiking tours in Ireland are the Kerry Camino and the Wicklow Way. The Kerry Camino follows the path formerly taken by pilgrims from all over Ireland who walked to Dingle, a port and departure point for Spain for those walking to Santiago de Compostela as part of the St. James pilgrimage.

Wicklow Way is Ireland’s first marked trail. It starts in the picturesque village of Clonegal, passes through charming Irish towns and villages, crosses the Wicklow Mountains, and ends in Dublin. The trail includes forests, mountains, and Glenmalur, the longest glacial valley in the country.

Greenlife’s most popular bike tour is the Achill Island Greenway. This journey takes cyclists along the Great Western Greenway, a former railway line that is now the longest traffic-free, off-road cycling trail in Ireland. On the way to Achill Island, participants enjoy the sights and scenery, including stunning views of the coastline and ocean.

Whether participants prefer to hike or bike, Greenlife provides a tour that meets their needs based on the tour ratings of Easy, Moderate, or Challenging. For groups wanting less walking or cycling each day, the Greenlife staff will customize a trip and add other transportation as needed.

For more information, contact Flynn at tony@greenlife-tours.com or visit greenlifetours.com.

Faith journeys in Scotland

In addition to historical sites such as the famous Edinburgh Castle, natural beauty, and some of the finest museums in the world, Scotland offers memorable faith-related tours and pilgrimages that highlight the Christian history of the country.

Fife Pilgrim Way

This route follows an ancient trail leading to St. Andrews, an important pilgrimage destination in medieval Europe for 400 years. People of all social statuses participated in the journey to be near the bones of St. Andrew, one of Jesus' disciples.

The route starts in the village of Culross in Fife and covers 102 kilometers (64 miles) before ending in St. Andrews. Along the way, travelers enjoy natural beauty as well as medieval landmarks and historical villages. This tour uses Fife's existing network of paths and tracks to offer varied opportunities for long distance, multiday hikes or shorter walks and circular routes.

Iona

The island of Iona, known as the cradle of Christianity in Scotland, has held special significance for Christians for many centuries. St. Columba, credited with bringing Christianity to Scotland, arrived on the island in 563 A.D. to share the news of the gospel.

Religious buildings of significance include Iona Abbey, built in 563 and still offering daily services; the 12th-century St. Oran's Chapel; and Reilig Odhran, a graveyard housing the burial sites of 48 Scottish kings, including Macbeth. Visitors arrive in Iona via ferry, but once on the island, walking is the best option since vehicle use is restricted.



CC FLICKR/ROY LATHWELL: bit.ly/33sAGp

Iona Abbey

Borders Abbeys Way

This scenic 105-kilometer (65-mile) circular route takes walkers to Kelso, Jedburgh, Melrose, and Dryburgh abbeys. Borders Abbeys Way is divided into five equidistant sections, so visitors can select one or more specific sections to walk, or they can choose to follow the entire route, section by section.

For more information about these faith-related tours, contact Nicole Graham of VisitScotland at nicole.graham@visitscotland.com or go to visitscotland.com.

Practicing your passion in England

Europe is the most visited region in the world, and England is one of its most popular destinations, welcoming more than 37 million visitors each year. With its prominent role in history and its modern-day royalty, England offers places that bring that history alive: castles, palaces, churches, and other iconic sites.

For travelers wanting a twist on the typical British tour, Pathfinders offers a variety of specialty tours that provide a

different perspective of the country while fueling a variety of passions. Always popular are the company's culinary and wine/beer tours, as gastronomy is a strong draw for many. England also offers the perfect backdrop for programs with a literary focus, with attractions related to such famous native writers as William Shakespeare and Jane Austen, as well as itineraries related to movies and television shows, such as Harry Potter and "Downton Abbey."

A unique option offered by the company is its selection of hobbies and crafts tours. Says Justin Taylor of Pathfinders, "Some of our most frequently requested tours in this category include those related to gardening, quilting and needlework, and ceramics and pottery. For all of these tours, we provide customized, hands-on activities combined with visits to typical sites throughout England."

Although most itineraries for these specialized tours last between 10 and 14 days, Pathfinders' dedicated staff will customize a trip of any length to meet the needs of the group. "Bring your student, church, or specialty club group to England, and we'll be happy to create the perfect trip to match your group's passion," says Taylor.

For more information, contact Taylor at justin@stita.co.uk or visit pathfinders-tours.co.uk.



A potter at work

PATHFINDERS

Belgium, France, and the Netherlands

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

"The Brave" sculpture
on Omaha Beach

The beaches and brunches of Normandy

The globetrotting father-son duo of Paul and Mark Bonte started French Side Travel five years ago as a way to share their passion for France's renowned cities and lesser-known places with other explorers. The destination management company specializes in luxury trips across its namesake country, and all of its itineraries are customized.

"People dream of romantic evenings in Paris, Champagne vineyards, and sun-drenched colorful villages in Provence," says James Rodriguez, the company's marketing manager. "We have the privilege of turning that dream into a reality."

One of French Side Travel's signature offerings is its six-day

Road Trip for Foodies through Normandy. The itinerary blends some of the northwestern region's top culinary experiences with its historical sites.

"The French love food, and there is no better way to connect with the locals than at a shared table," says Rodriguez. "We include market tours, visits to artisanal Calvados apple brandy and Camembert cheese producers, and a cooking class with a local chef to let visitors do just that."

Those stops are blended with exploration of Claude Monet's Giverny and World War II sites. History buffs can spend two hours or two days seeing Omaha and the other D-Day landing beaches, along with military cemeteries. The tours can be adapted to focus on American, Canadian, and/or British battlefields.

Three other towns in the Normandy area that the company includes are Honfleur, Deauville, and Bayeux. Honfleur features a charming port area that teems with cafés and medieval buildings, and Deauville is famous for its seafood.

"Bayeux doesn't always get onto Normandy itineraries, but it'd be a real shame to miss it," says Rodriguez of the quaint village. "It has stunning architecture and the incomparable Bayeux Tapestry—a 230-foot long masterpiece that tells the story of William the Conqueror, who invaded and became the King of England, forever changing world history and leaving an indelible mark on the English language."

For more information, email Rodriguez at james@frenchsidetravel.com or go to frenchsidetravel.com.



Cheese shop

ATOUT FRANCE/CODRIC HELSLEY

TOP PHOTO: ATOUT FRANCE/NATHALIE BAETENS

Antwerp: From Rubens to diamonds and chocolate

“Antwerp has always been a city of innovation and cutting-edge craftsmanship,” says Marco Frank, trade manager for the Tourist Office for Flanders-Belgium. “From the Middle Ages to modern times, Antwerp has been able to re-invent itself without forgetting its past.”

Travelers can learn about some of the city’s signature products and people, including the following five things, as they tour the city:

- ▶ Antwerp is a hotbed of diamond production, and visitors can learn more about this part of the city’s heritage as they explore DIVA, a new museum highlighting the dazzling world of diamonds.
- ▶ The Chocolate Nation attraction pays tribute to the area’s renowned confectionary throughout 14 themed rooms. The world’s largest Belgian chocolate museum offers tours, demonstrations, and workshops, and guests can sample products and have a meal at the on-site restaurant.
- ▶ Another famous local product is Elixir d’Anvers. The uniquely flavored liqueur, which debuted in 1863, has been used as a remedy for ailments in years past and as part of recipes and cocktails crafted by modern chefs and bartenders.
- ▶ At the Red Star Line Museum, visitors can learn about the legendary line that carried millions of passengers—ranging from Belgium’s elite to families seeking a better life—from Antwerp to eastern U.S. cities, such as Philadelphia and New York City, between 1873 and 1934.
- ▶ No visit to Antwerp would be complete without a stop at Rubenshuis. The large Italian-style villa, which is where city native Peter-Paul Rubens spent the last decade of his life, includes famous works and the artist’s personal effects as well as elaborate gardens.



Demonstration at the Chocolate Nation

To learn more, contact Frank at marco.frank@visitflanders.com or go to visitflanders.com.

Exploring Leiden’s neighborhoods

This year Leiden will be a focal point for tourism in the Netherlands based on its tie to the Pilgrims’ journey on the *Mayflower* to the United States 400 years ago. In addition to checking out sites related to the anniversary celebration, visitors can enjoy some of the Dutch city’s vibrant neighborhoods.

The heart of the city since the 1200s, Breestraat seamlessly blends the ancient and the modern. Early business tycoons lived and worked in this area, which boasts Leiden’s iconic City Hall. In more recent years, locals have gathered in the district for shopping, dining, and live entertainment.

The Downtown Leiden neighborhood is based around the Old Rhine and New Rhine. Travelers flock to this area—especially in the summer—to enjoy boat rides on the rivers, dine at waterfront cafés, and relax on water terraces.

The Latin Quarter (*Pieterskwartier*) has been home to creative types and students for centuries. A walk through the quaint, narrow streets covers many sites of historical significance, including Peter’s Church, a 12th-century Gothic building that is the city’s signature attraction.

Contact Mincke Pijpers of Leiden, Key to Discovery, at mincke@leidenmarketing.nl or go to mayflower400leiden.com to learn more. 📍



Make connections Make opportunities Make a statement Make Contact 2020

As a receptive operator, our client base is all tour operators, so the relationships I foster through NTA are invaluable on many levels—most important from the sales perspective.

—Michelle Pino, Northeast Unlimited Tours; Massachusetts

Sponsoring at Contact was, hands down, one of the best investments we could have made. The relaxed, networking-focused format gives you the chance to interact with everyone. This is unlike any show I have ever attended.

—Alyssa Keshel, American Music Theatre

We network with other operators to share business practices and industry contacts—as well as sharing our struggles, strategies, and new ideas. And as a wholesale operator, we also create mutually beneficial partnerships.

—Elaine Moulder, Brilliant Edventures; Georgia



Anchorage | March 18-21, 2020

NTA buyers attend Contact to focus on best practices, best colleagues, and better business.

NTA sellers attend Contact as sponsors because ... buyers.

 NTAcontact.com

 +1.859.264.6540

 headquarters@ntastaff.com





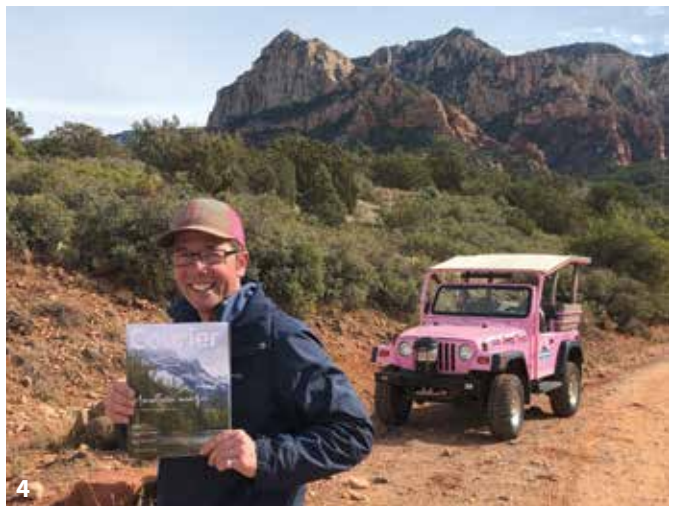
1



2



3



4



5



6

MEGAN MATLAND

Where in the world is *Courier* as we start the new year? Turns out ... a lot of places!

1. Jim DePhilippo of the Philadelphia CVB and Diane Meglino of One Liberty Observation Deck
2. Seymour the Moose, aka Visit Anchorage's Spiff Chambers
3. Lorna Sierolawski of Ottawa's Canadian Museum of Nature in front of the "Museum of the Moon" sculpture
4. Pink Adventure Tours' Kyle Linafelter on the company's Scenic Rim Tour in Sedona
5. Laura Maye with staff members at Coral Castle in Miami
6. Eric Lund of Visit Estes Park and the snow-capped Rocky Mountains

Meet the Members

Simon Shopping Destinations

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

NTA contact: Nora Barboe,
senior marketing manager

Office phone: +1.973.403.2586

Website: traveltrade.simon.com

NTA member since: 1986

How many locations are under the Simon Shopping Destinations umbrella?

With the largest collection of shopping destinations in the United States, Simon Shopping Destinations consists of more than 100 Simon Malls, Premium Outlets, and The Mills that can be found in most major cities in the U.S.

What are a couple of benefits or incentives you offer operators?

We offer an online reservation system on the website, where tour operators can pre-register their groups. Groups of 10 or more will receive complimentary Savings Passports filled with hundreds of dollars in savings. We also offer VIP tour greetings and designated motorcoach parking, and some properties offer complimentary meal vouchers for escorts and drivers.

Do you have anything new to share with NTA members?

The benefit to pre-registering groups now through our travel trade portal is that our



property teams will have Savings Passports and coupon books set aside for them, which allows for more shopping time.

What brands can shoppers find when they visit one of your locations?

Simon Malls offer the ideal mix of renowned style icons and the hottest retailers in an unparalleled retail and dining environment

for visitors. Simon Premium Outlets has the world's finest designer names and brands at savings of up to 65% every day. The Mills are the largest outlets and value retail destinations with over 180 brands.

For more information, contact Barboe at nbarboe@simon.com.

American Christian Tours

RICE LAKE, WISCONSIN

NTA contact: Scott Schweitzer,
vice president of sales and marketing

Office phone: 800.222.2001

Website: acts-tours.com

NTA member since: 1985

Tell us about American Christian Tours.

ACTS has been providing adult, family, and student tours all over the U.S. since 1984. We specialize in pre-formed groups and can accommodate all group sizes.

What is one of your popular programs?

The historic East Coast is a popular destination. With our nation's birth in this area, it is filled with history!

I love my job because ...

The camaraderie throughout our entire staff makes the days go quickly. The team at ACTS truly cares about its clients and one another. It's humbling to serve with such amazing people.

What destination would you love to visit someday?

Israel

You get to pick dinner tonight, and it can be anywhere in the world. Where you are going?

South of the border for authentic Mexican food.

For more information, contact Schweitzer at scott@acts-tours.com.



Planet Hollywood/Buca di Beppo

ORLANDO, FLORIDA

NTA contact: Matt Luckett,
national sales director

Office phone: +1.323.648.8876

Website: planethollywoodintl.com

NTA member since: 2003

What's new with the company?

We have several new restaurant brands that we have acquired or opened, including Planet Hollywood, Buca di Beppo, Burtucci's, Earl of Sandwich, and Chicken Guy. We now own all 55-plus locations of Burtucci's from D.C. to Boston, which is known for its family-style Italian and brick-oven pizzas. We have introduced a few new concepts with celebrity chefs Guy Fieri and Hung Huynh, season two winner of "Top Chef." We also now have Seaside on the Pier in Santa Monica, with three levels and spectacular views.

What can a visiting group expect from an experience at one of your restaurants?

All our restaurants have a story and experiences—from the movie, TV, and celebrity

memorabilia at Planet Hollywood and sharing a family-style meal at Buca di Beppo to tasting Guy Fieri's 22 different dipping sauces at Chicken Guy.

How many locations of restaurants and hotels does your company manage?

Over 200 locations and 13 brands

What destination is on your bucket list?

I would love to visit the Maldives and experience an over-the-water bungalow.

What do you like to do when you're not at work?

I enjoy outdoor activities, as we have good weather year-round in Southern California. I enjoy wine tasting and being at the beach, the golf course, and sporting events.

What tunes can we find in your iTunes or CD collection?

I listen to all types of music. I currently listen to a lot of country music, from Jake Owen to Jana Kramer.



For more information, contact Luckett at mluckett@earlenterprise.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



CONTACT
Anchorage | March 18-21, 2020

Anchorage, Alaska
March 18-21, 2020



DESTINATION
CAPITOL HILL

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



travel exchange '20
RENO TAHOE
NOVEMBER 15-19

Reno Tahoe
Nov. 15-19, 2020



CONTACT
Memphis | March 17-20, 2021

Memphis, Tennessee
March 17-20, 2021



travel exchange '21
CLEVELAND
NOVEMBER 14-18

Cleveland
Nov. 14-18, 2021

Introducing ... NTA's newest members

DoubleTree Suites by Hilton Disney Springs

LAKE BUENA VISTA, FLORIDA

Tour supplier

Located within walking distance to Disney Springs and the only all-suite hotel on Walt Disney World property, the DoubleTree Suites offers cookie receptions for all tour groups and complimentary motorcoach parking. Guests enjoy Extra Magic Hours and the 60-day Fast Pass, and the staff can arrange Disney character meet-and-greets for groups as well as special events inside the parks.



Dawn Moorman

Area director of sales and marketing
+1.407.934.1000
dawn.moorman@hilton.com
doubletreeguestsuites.com

"I have over 15 years of experience in the hospitality industry and have worked on both the tour operator and supplier side. We're excited to be a part of NTA!"

Objectif France

LYON, FRANCE

Tour operator

A local DMC specializing in customized tours in France and Western Europe, Objectif France is a company of eight people with more than 50 years of accumulated expertise in tourism and tailor-made tours. The company also organizes trips to Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, England, and Scotland.



Joël Massé

Commercial director
+33.0.474.657.468
joel.masse@objectiffrance.com
objectif-france.us

"After having traveled all over the world for 15 years, I realized three years ago that my own country was one of the most exciting destinations to explore! I've since been sharing my passion and expertise with discerning travelers who want to discover France's jewels."

The Holy Land Experience



ORLANDO, FLORIDA

Tour supplier

Home to the largest indoor model of Jerusalem in 66 A.D., The Holy Land Experience is an immersive theatrical theme park with live Biblical dramas presented in multiple venues. Other exhibits include the Wilderness Tabernacle and the Bible Museum, all located in a beautifully landscaped park. The attraction offers excellent tour operator rates and is great for seniors, family reunions, and student field trips.



Sherri Patko

Sales manager
+1.321.206.6040
spatko@holylandexperience.com
holylandexperience.com

"I have been in faith-based tourism for 15 years. I am an avid gamer, love to read, and treasure my two sons!"

Topgolf

DALLAS, TEXAS

Tour supplier

Topgolf is a premier entertainment destination where guests can host birthday parties, corporate events, or a night out with friends. With 60 locations across the U.S. and three in England, the company believes that every great occasion starts with play, is fueled by food and drink, moved by music, and made possible through community.



Tara Hippensteel

National manager, tour and travel
+1.469.638.7709
tara.hippensteel@topgolf.com
topgolf.com

"I am thrilled to have joined Topgolf as national tour and travel manager! As a huge fan of the brand, I look forward to sharing the fun with all NTA members."

Food on Foot Tours/ Gourmet NY Tasting/ Intro to NY

WHEATLEY HEIGHTS, NEW YORK

Tour supplier

As the company celebrates its 10th anniversary, its goal is to take the work of where to eat in New York out of operators' hands and to help, literally, serve their guests. It will soon launch Intro to NY, a live interactive presentation that lets groups know everything they need about being a visitor in NYC and their meal options.



Corey Taylor

President/CEO
+1.631.491.0326
tours@foodonfoottours.com
foodonfoottours.com

"I turned my passion into a career. I now help everyone eat great, save money, and see the real New York!"

Walks

AUSTIN, TEXAS

Tour supplier

Walks offers unique and memorable travel experiences across Europe and the United States and strives to always find new and better ways to explore even the most familiar attractions. In business for 10 years, the company offers tours in 13 cities around the world and has built a solid reputation and a world-class team.



Nicola Cox

Director of sales
+1.512.539.0286
nicola@takewalks.com
takewalks.com

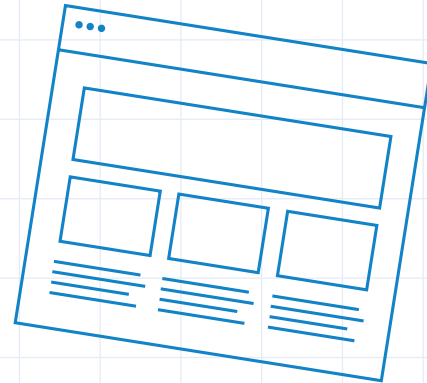
"Irish born and bred and an ex-travel agent, I've lived in the Middle East, U.K., and Australia, have visited 60-plus countries, and am passionate about the travel industry." 🇮🇪

Courier



What began as a four-page newsletter in 1974 evolved into a four-color **magazine** loaded with original articles that explain new and upcoming tour product, focus on destinations, provide insight into industry trends, and inform National Tour Association members about the events and benefits.

With the launch of **NTAcourier.com**, articles are now more easily accessed, read and shared, not only by members, but also by the larger travel community—and by anyone with an internet connection and a yearning to explore.



Also providing a digital multiplier, *Courier* uses social media **@ntacourier** to cultivate and push content to followers, who in turn share those stories that are meaningful to *their* followers.

Courier's engaging articles and insightful information is now disseminated in print, online and via social media. Now with a wider audience, we can better promote NTA members and the many ways they enable people to experience the depth and breadth of meaningful and memorable travel.



20/20 vision for the new year

AS THEY TURNED THE PAGE to 2020, the following NTA staffers shared their New Year's resolutions—and the thinking behind them:

Abbie Dykes, project coordinator

Beth Engel, CTP, sales director

Ashley Fish, senior marketing manager

Kendall Fletcher, marketing manager

Pat Henderson, managing editor

Pam Inman, CTP, past president

Kami Risk, CTP, NTA Services president

Kay Saffari, CTP, FTA and Hispanic market manager

What's your typical practice for making New Year's resolutions?

I'm always looking to the future, so I try to set intentions and think about what I want to achieve in the new year ... and it usually involves travel. —Ashley

I try to make my resolutions practical, and most years I take advice from my daughters. —Beth

Last year, my big resolution was to get my scuba diving certification so I could dive in Fiji. And this year it's to begin my new life ... with my new normal. —Pam

Rather than making resolutions when the calendar turns over to a new year, I actually look forward to the milestones. This year, I'll celebrate my sixth wedding anniversary, my son will turn 5 years old, I'll turn 30 for the second time ... things like that. —Kendall

As I moved through my college years, I stopped making New Year's resolutions, mainly because I never followed through with them. Now I just hope the new year brings me good health and happiness. —Abbie

I had my palm read while in Armenia in September, and the reading included a warning that I must take charge of my health in my 50s. Since I am 59, that's my New Year's resolution. So goodbye to all good food ... bring on the celery and water! —Kay



I try to focus on one theme each year. In 2019 I focused on gratitude, and for 2020 I'll be focusing on mindfulness. —Kami

Any expectations in your personal life for 2020?

I'm hoping Pearl Jam will tour North America so I can catch them again. —Pat

I just bought a house in 2019, so I plan to do more work on that. —Ashley

I hope to finish and publish my novel. It's been my goal since I was a kid, and I think 2020 is the year I'm going to make it happen. —Kendall

What about travel plans?

We're taking a winter Caribbean cruise with my best friend from college and her husband. Antics will be similar to those displayed at Indiana State in the late '70s. —Beth

I like to practice what we preach—Project: Time Off—so my plans are set: Greece, Colorado for skiing, Ireland for golfing, a Holland tulip cruise, and scuba diving somewhere. —Pam

Mexico, to visit a friend living there. Australia, Croatia, and Iceland are also high on my bucket list. —Ashley

We hope to visit family again this year in Wilmington, North Carolina, and spend some time at the beach. —Kendall

I'm ecstatic to be traveling to Anchorage in March—for work! —Abbie

The Saffari family will be taking a trip to an international destination as soon

as son Cyrus finishes law school in May. Last year we had a spectacular trip in Greece; who knows where it will be this year? Four people need to agree! —Kay

Based on recent emails with Scandinavia Tours' Monique van Dijk-Seppola about an upcoming Fam tour, it seems Norway will be the place to be in February. —Pat

I'm looking forward to traveling to Anchorage for Contact 2020, and I'm *really* looking forward to my parents coming along so we can explore other parts of Alaska, too. —Kami

Any other thoughts about resolutions and the new year?

I like the new year because it's a clean slate and feels like a fresh start. —Ashley

The new year is a good time to reflect upon years past and how to improve yourself and the world around you. I'm a practicing Jew, so I get to do this twice each calendar year: Yom Kippur and Jan. 1. —Beth

Change is in the air! —Pam

I plan to watch more TV news shows; maybe that one on ABC called "20/20." —Pat

I think a new year is a good reminder to make time to do the things I want to do—like lunch dates with friends, reading the stack of books on my nightstand, and simple things like writing down the cute things my son says—before too much time passes and another new year comes 'round. —Kendall



Now available online for you and your clients!

For more information about the NTA Travel Protection Plan:

Call 1.800.388.1470

Fax 516.294.0609

Email geni.priolo@aon.com

- Enroll in the NTA Travel Protection plans – Easy as 1,2,3
- Enroll anywhere anytime!
- Now available online for you and your clients!
- Add link to your website browser www.nta.aontravelprotect.com

Aon Affinity is the brand name for the brokerage and program administration operations of Affinity Insurance Services, Inc. (TX 13695); (AR 244489); in CA & MN, AIS Affinity Insurance Agency, Inc. (CA 0795465); in OK, AIS Affinity Insurance Services, Inc.; in CA, Aon Affinity Insurance Services, Inc. (CA 0G94493), Aon Direct Insurance Administrators and Berkely Insurance Agency and in NY, AIS Affinity Insurance Agency. Affinity Insurance Services is acting as a Managing General Agent as that term is defined in section 626.015(14) of the Florida Insurance Code. As an MGA we are acting on behalf of our carrier partner.

OVER 5,000 TRAILS BLAZED DAILY.

Your next opportunity is a flight away. Just ask the 170 million passengers who choose to fly to one of our 327 destinations.



KEEP CLIMBING



Based on average number of Delta flights per day in the March 2016 schedule. Includes flights operated by our Delta Connection® carriers: Compass Airlines, Endeavor Air, Inc., ExpressJet Airlines, Inc., GoJet Airlines, Shuttle America, and SkyWest; Delta Shuttle® carriers: Shuttle America and Compass Airlines.