

DELIVERING BUSINESS ESSENTIALS TO NTA MEMBERS

MARCH 2020

# Courier

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Blue Ridge Mountains near Asheville, North Carolina





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### Who's hungry?

Answer: Everybody. *Courier's* Bob Rouse gathered descriptions of distinctive dishes from eight destinations. It makes for flavor-filled reading, but please: no drooling on the magazine.



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See what *Courier's* Kendall Fletcher learned when she opened the door into the past (and present) of four NTA-member historical homes—from California to Carolina.



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## PLANNING AHEAD

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

### ▶ JUNE/JULY ISSUE

#### DESTINATIONS

##### Deep South

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas

##### Mid-Atlantic U.S.

Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania

##### Pacific Northwest

British Columbia, Oregon, Washington

##### Germany and Switzerland

##### City Spotlight: Rapid City, South Dakota

#### SPECIAL COVERAGE

North American National Parks

Travel Exchange '20 Preview (Reno Tahoe)

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#### DEADLINES

Space: April 3 | Material: April 13

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#### DESTINATIONS

##### Coastal California

Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco

##### Great Lakes

Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin

##### Southwest

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##### Central Europe

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##### South Pacific

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##### City Spotlight: Washington, D.C.

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#### 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.



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**Bob Rouse**

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I'M NO CHEF. And the food I prepare cannot compete with the delectable dishes served up in this month's foodie feature, "Who's hungry?" on page 13.

Yet I make no apology for my preferred lunch, pictured at right. Just as any local specialty helps tell the story of a destination—and we're featuring eight—so do my apples and pizza weave a remarkable (if repetitive) tale about *my* daily destination: NTA Headquarters.

Am I envious when I look at images of, say, shrimp from Amelia Island or when I imagine spicy cheesy burritos from Gallup? No ... Well, yes. I mean, I guess I'll have to go to those eight places in the story and see if their mouth-watering meals measure up to my slices of heaven.

Also New Orleans. When a native New Orleanian talks about food, I listen. And Sherry Constance with *The Court of Two Sisters* has plenty to say in *AfterWords*, page 48.

We might all have a bit of house envy when we step inside the special and spectacular historical homes that Kendall Fletcher introduces us to in her feature, starting on page 18. Each one has a unique story, of course ... then and now.

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Asheville, North Carolina, is so loaded with attractions and activities, we put two writers on the case: Kendall teams up with Jeff Quire (*Courier* designer by day, intrepid traveler whenever possible) to showcase Asheville in this month's City Spotlight, pages 22–24.

Pat Henderson covers a lot of ground for this issue, highlighting NTA members in the U.S. Four Corners, in Ontario and Québec, and in a six-pack of African nations, (pages 26–35). Kay Saffari provides good ideas for connecting with members in five countries: Armenia, Italy, Greece, Malta, and Turkey. That journey starts on page 36.

And let's get down to business. Catherine Heeg helps us understand just how vital video is in our social media marketing. Don't be fooled by her page 10 title. And before that, on pages 8 and 9, you can learn what a dozen-plus members opined when asked about the future of the travel industry. Not only do they make predictions, they also share what's working for them.

As pleased as I am with what's in this issue, I'm even more elated about what we're not mentioning this month ... and that's Travel Exchange. In the past couple of years, all of us on staff have been eager to share details about the series of innovations we've implemented, but we're not through innovating ... and I can't wait to fill you in.

I also can't wait for lunch. Come by NTA HQ anytime, and I'll fix you a plate. Just give me a heads-up, as I apportion my pizza pretty carefully.

Bon appetit!



**On the cover:**  
The beautiful Blue Ridge  
Mountains near Asheville,  
North Carolina  
*Photo by exploreashville.com*



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**Jim Warren, CTP**

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The momentum continued in Fort Worth with the rollout of the Best Pitch and Sales Missions sessions.

The results were amazing and positive—and a great example of how the travel community asked for and responded to new and creative business opportunities. The exciting part of the story is that these value changes are part of the ongoing strategy to inject new energy, new technology, and increased ROI for all members. Watch for more innovations to be introduced in Reno!

As a community, NTA continues to be the leader in travel innovation for our domestic and international members. As an industry, we also have a responsibility to protect and preserve the environment that enables us to create our amazing travel experiences and to be a platform for greater understanding and international cooperation throughout the world.

**“You have probably heard the expression ‘We are family’ at an NTA event ... but I suggest that a more realistic definition of NTA is that we are a community.”**

Our NTA staff and board of directors are two of the finest groups of travel professionals in the industry. I invite you to become a part of that community. It's an opportunity to grow as a leader by committing your skill as a volunteer, earning your CTP, joining a committee, participating in a Tourism Cares project, or setting your target on becoming a member of the board.

Successful and growing communities are those with active participation and committed leaders. Remember ... together we go—and grow—further.

BECOMING CHAIR of the NTA Board of Directors for 2020 has given me the opportunity of reviewing the great adventure I have had working in the travel industry for over 40 years. I have been a DMO, a tour supplier, and a tour operator, and for most of that journey I can honestly say that my success in each of those positions has been directly related to the relationships and communication lines I have built and nurtured through NTA.

Whether NTA is a new opportunity or well-valued experience, you have probably heard the expression “We are family” at an NTA event. Over the years I have established many great relationships with NTA colleagues that often make them feel as close as family, but I suggest that a more realistic definition of NTA is that we are a *community*.

In my presentation from the Travel Exchange stage, I said that my success and, perhaps, my survival in the industry have been based on that community. In one way or another, the friendship, knowledge, and forward vision of many of the NTA members in that audience have enabled me to succeed in this industry.

In 2018 the board encouraged the NTA staff to move forward with a five-year plan to re-energize Travel Exchange and enable it to meet the constantly changing demands of the travel industry. The changes started in Milwaukee with the introduction of an attractive, open-floor concept.

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COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

## Help your travelers get REAL ID-ready

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security will implement the final phase of REAL ID enforcement on Oct. 1, 2020. Through the program, every American air traveler must present a REAL ID-compliant driver's license, state-issued enhanced driver's license, or other acceptable forms of identification (such as a valid passport or U.S. military ID) to fly within the United States.

"This is an important step in enhancing commercial aviation security, and we urge travelers to ensure they have compliant documents," said Acting Secretary Kevin K. McAleenan. "DHS is committed to working with states as they continue their efforts to issue REAL IDs to Americans."

There has been a lot of concern in the travel industry about the level of preparedness that exists and about states' progress in making REAL ID licenses available to residents. An estimated 99 million Americans (39%) do not have any of the forms of identification that they'll need next year, and the majority of Americans (57%)

are unaware of the Oct. 1, 2020, deadline.

Once the policy goes into effect, individuals who are unable to verify their identity with a REAL ID will not be allowed to fly domestically.

Tour operators, as well as destination marketers and tour suppliers, can help raise awareness for REAL ID. There are a number of resources available at the Department of Homeland Security website, [dhs.gov/real-id](https://dhs.gov/real-id), that offer more specifics on the program—including specifics on what people need to do—before the deadline. Find an extensive FAQ document and many downloadable promotional materials at [tsa.gov/real-id](https://tsa.gov/real-id).



## Make 2020 the year you earn your CTP

You've probably heard the quote "Leaders are learners" before. And at NTA, we agree.

That's why we provide you with the latest industry knowledge and information in a variety of ways from a variety of presenters. Whether it's seminars that you can experience live at Travel Exchange, or webinars that you can experience from your own desk, NTA provides you with the information you need to stay on top.

And if you want to take your industry knowledge to an even higher level, NTA's Certified Tour Professional program is exactly what you're looking for. Your association developed the program more than 30 years ago, and with regular updates, it is still the industry's most specialized and comprehensive program.

You'll learn more about the industry through curriculum that was developed by and for packaged travel professionals. Earning the CTP designation shows your peers that you're an experienced, knowledgeable, and motivated professional who cares about the travel industry and the colleagues with whom you work.

Leaders are learners. And NTA gives you every tool you need to keep learning ... and keep leading.

For more information on the CTP program and NTA education, go to [ntaonline.com/education](https://ntaonline.com/education).



2019 CTP graduates on stage in Fort Worth

## NTA: Your partner in government relations

NTA monitors key issues affecting travel and tourism and advocates on behalf of its members and the industry. Active with policymakers in the U.S. Congress and the administration, your association coordinates with its partners on a number of legislative issues, including National Park Service fees, travel to Cuba, and other industry-related matters.

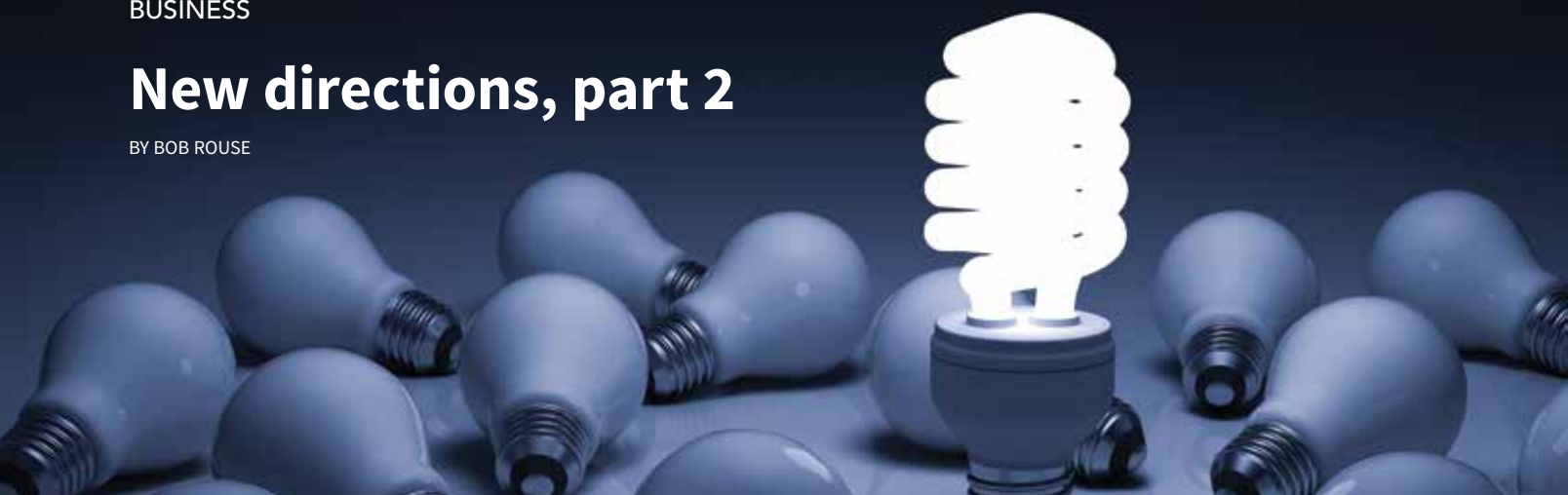
Members annually head to Washington, D.C., to participate in Destination Capitol Hill, a fly-in event that includes policy briefings and meetings with members of the U.S. Congress and their staffers. This year's summit takes place April 1–2, and because of a change in Congress' schedule, the timing of DCH events also shifted. Learn the latest details and register at [ustravel.org/events/DCH](https://ustravel.org/events/DCH).

You can make a difference by getting involved at a grassroots level and by contributing to NTA's advocacy-related funds.

To learn more, go to [ntaonline.com/government-relations](https://ntaonline.com/government-relations). ☎

# New directions, part 2

BY BOB ROUSE



IN THE FIRST PART of this *Courier* series on dealing with change (in the February issue), NTA members shared their ideas about adapting to new travel trends, technologies, and consumer preferences, as well as their tolerance for risk.

In Part 2, we see what members imagine when they look into the future—and anticipate how they will deal with it:

**What changes do you see in store for the travel industry?**

» And how are you adapting to that change?

## Lois Stoltzfus

*The Amish Experience*

*Bird-in-Hand, Pennsylvania*

More groups will want that flexible “I-pick-what-I-want” model. Very few people have been willing to accommodate smaller group numbers, and whoever figures out how to do this well is going to find themselves very popular. That is one reason why the cruise sector has grown so rapidly: A cruise is like one massive group tour that gives everyone immense flexibility.

» We are willing to do group rates for smaller numbers, at least for the tour elements we own entirely. And we continue trying to bring our local partners on board and understand the importance of this change in the industry.

## Nish Patel

*Mayflower Cruises and Tours*

*Lisle, Illinois*

It is all about choices. Our travelers are getting savvier, and they do research before they sign up. Make sure that your

product is available in the web searches and that the content is good. This means we need to spend more on the internet and are able to track and follow up on leads that we get.

» We have increased our budget for web searches and have hired experts who can give us maximum return for the money we spend.

## Christian Utpatel

*Terra Lu Travel | Homberg, Germany*

We’re seeing a trend which I would call “pampered individual adventures.” People want to have adventures and authentic experiences ... but in a safe and clean environment. We once had a client tour operator who wanted his group to see a real cheese farm, and we took them to a farm. But afterwards, the tour operator was very upset and complained because the shoes of some travelers got dirty.

» We arrange most group tours differently than 20 years ago and provide more options for individual experiences during the day. A group may go on an orientation walk together, but afterwards guests can choose to sightsee by bike, meet a local chef, or tour at a local museum. And then the group meets again in the evening.

## Nick Calderazzo

*Twin Travel Concepts*

*Kinderhook, New York*

Travel has become more necessary and tourism will grow. Therefore, as baby boomers take center stage, they will look towards travel professionals (online or in person) to navigate through the myriad options.

» Our travel programs will become more flexible with additional options for each traveler. We will become more online friendly. And we will take care to adjust quickly to economic changes.

## Mark Hoffmann, CTP

*Sports Leisure Vacations*

*Sacramento, California*

The changing climate is going to create huge transportation challenges and change the way some people perceive travel. (Flight-shaming in Europe is an example). Overtourism is hurting some destinations, and the recent national park issues are based, in part, on the size of crowds at some parks.

» Keeping on top of issues that impact us is really important, and NTA gives me those opportunities. The Owner’s Network lets me sit down twice a year and compare problems and new ideas with my peers. For smaller companies, this is particularly important.

## Sandy Wilde

*Heritage Park Historical Village*

*Calgary, Alberta*

Working primarily with group tourism, I am seeing smaller group sizes becoming the norm. We have adjusted to this trend and, with all the hands-on activities that we offer, we are actually better able to customize and provide great customer service to smaller groups.

» Sometimes you have to absorb the costs. We have introduced a minor charge—a flat fee to cover labor expenses—if the group is smaller than 15 paid guests. Otherwise, we have set

inclusive tour rates for 15 or more guests so that all activities and value-added activities are included in one price.

### **Jerry Varner, CTP**

*Making Memories Tours | Washburn, Missouri*

Travelers have a continuing desire for cultural authenticity, uniqueness, and variety in their experiences. To keep things fresh, we must always be looking for those hidden gems that are en route, hidden in the city, or in outlying areas.

» At the end of every tour, we hand out feedback sheets, both for evaluating the tour they just finished and for getting their thoughts on other subjects, such as tour ideas, the pace of a tour, and ways we can improve. We make changes and adjustments, and hopefully, they see our desire to serve and decide to join us again.

### **Corey Taylor**

*Food on Foot Tours | New York City*

It will get harder and harder for everyone to get advance bookings in the individual market. The upcoming generations have been conditioned to not book in advance.

» We are attending NTA and other conferences to increase our group bookings so we are not as dependent on the individual market.

### **Jay Smith**

*Sports Travel and Tours  
Hatfield, Massachusetts*

People will still travel in groups, but they desire more flexibility: an FIT flavor within a group setting. While on tour, we will have to make daily offerings to deliver options to our clients. I could see tour escorts swiping payments for admissions on the fly and then dropping off small groups of people at different attractions, with planned pick-up times.

» We already make efforts to use hotels in downtown locations to give people easy options to walk on their own to the sites and sounds of that location. If there is a drive longer than six hours, our multi-day/city programs will fly intra-trip to maximize “time doing” rather than bus riding. We also tend to fly into one city to begin a trip and depart from

the last city, eliminating mileage to get back to the first city.

### **Elizabeth Adkins**

*Rail Source International  
Olin, North Carolina*

Train travel within Europe will increase, as trains are more green than flying, and the trains are getting faster and faster. Travel agencies will grow again as agent knowledge increases and younger generations are willing to pay for that information.

» We hope to increase our staff’s familiarity with destinations through educational trips, use of local trusted ground suppliers, and other educational resources (webinars). With regards to technology, we are going to implement a new booking system, and in the next few years we will have a travel app for our clients’ itineraries.

## **“People will still travel in groups, but they desire more flexibility: an FIT flavor within a group setting.”**

*Jay Smith, Sports Travel and Tours*

### **Nayaz Noor**

*Safir Tours | Victoria, Australia*

Traditional transportation will not change—air, cruises, rail, and road. What will change is technology within them. Also, artificial intelligence and augmented and virtual reality tools will be adapted by many and will become mainstream in our industry.

» I would invest in new technology to disrupt the playing field and garner new markets but will take a wait-and-see approach before implementing it in markets that adapt slowly to changes.

### **Marsha Wilson**

*Visit Durango (Colorado)*

People travel with a purpose or want themed experiences. And as more travelers are seeking a customized and localized travel experience, DMOs are often becoming destination concierges.

» We already fill this role on a daily basis by making travelers aware of the unique and educational aspects of the Durango area.

### **Roland Neave, CTP**

*Wells Gray Tours  
Kamloops, British Columbia*

I am sometimes amazed at the destinations mentioned in the top 10 lists that *National Geographic* and *Condé Nast* publish, but travel is a popular topic in social settings, and it’s exciting to own bragging rights about a place that nobody else has been to. Also, I see the trend towards late booking continuing in the next decade, and this is exasperating. Many hotels do not recognize this trend and are changing their final rooming list deadlines from 30 days to 60 days, which is impossible to meet.

» My philosophy is that early bookers need to be rewarded, and I will put up with empty spaces on the tour before I will do a late-booking discount.

### **Gail Myer**

*Myer Hotels | Branson, Missouri*

Thank heavens customers’ interests and desires change gradually, so we get the opportunity to adapt. The cell phone camera and the ability to share photos have made the public more curious about unique places and has spurred visitation to places that were previously undiscovered.

» My father, who founded our company, used to say, “The tourists will continue to travel and vacation in the same way as in the past. But, they will want to see different things based on their past life experiences.”

### **Jonathan Elkoub**

*Uno Restaurants (consultant) | Boston*

I believe the rise of a global distribution system—already in place in the airline and hotel industries—will emerge in tour and travel packages, giving consumers all the choices, all the time, anytime. I can also see the trend of offering a personalized travel “companion” app with various “must” functions becoming a norm—and probably not on a device like today’s smartphone but something different, perhaps a wearable watch or AR glasses.

» One of the reasons I decided to open my own consultancy business comes from wanting to help my tourism industry peers with technology transitions. ☺



# 4 reasons to stop creating video

BY CATHERINE HEEG



DID YOU KNOW that 72% of people prefer to learn about a company via video rather than the written word? And that 93% of market-

ers say they've landed a new customer thanks to a video on social media?

We know that video is valuable in the world of travel and tourism: It raises your brand awareness, captures the attention of potential clients, and inspires visitors. For many, creating video is at the forefront of their strategic plans and social wish lists.

But maybe you shouldn't do it. If one of these scenarios fits your situation, you can quit creating video right now. (In the meantime, be prepared for some sassy yet sane video tips.)

## 1. Your groups are full

Are your upcoming group tours completely full? Is your waiting list a mile long? If so, no need to shoot video!

If you do need to fill more seats, though, video can help by attracting aspiring travelers. Tune in for one key takeaway to grow your video viewership: [bit.ly/2uglPEL](http://bit.ly/2uglPEL).

## 2. Stagnant strategy

Does your video strategy date to the era when the cameras were as big as a bread box? If so—and you're happy with that—you probably don't need to create videos. If you're ready to modernize, though, you need a new strategy.

Viewer interests and expectations change on a dime, and keeping up with current trends in storytelling and animation—as well as cheeky humor—are as important as the tech involved in video creation. Here are some tips to build your strategy for 2020: [bit.ly/2SdO0vU](http://bit.ly/2SdO0vU)

## 3. An equipment budget eludes you

What happens when you start watching a video only to find the audio is garbled or the video is boring? You tune out, right?

Don't even think about posting video unless you make a small investment in

an external microphone for your phone or video camera. And while you're buying, how about adding a selfie stick or tri-pod to your shopping cart? These two items will take your video quality to the next level and inspire people to watch and enjoy for a longer time.

Even though many people watch video on social sites without the audio, YouTube viewers, as well as keeners (your perfect audience), will turn up the volume. Don't scare off your hot prospects with bad audio.

And to grab your viewers' attention right away, tune in to the video mentioned above for a quick tip ([bit.ly/2uglPEL](http://bit.ly/2uglPEL)).

## 4. Misplaced advertising anguish

Why spend so much time writing, shooting, and editing video if it's seen by only a few of your social fans? (Research shows that organic reach is dropping quickly.) Or if it's shown to an ad audience that's not interested? Don't waste your time or ad budget.

If you're investing time in creating a video strategy, invest a bit more time to create targeted ad audiences. You might unnecessarily worry about your ability to create video when you should direct your anguish to your choice of audience.

You can create different ad audiences to attract unique demographics,

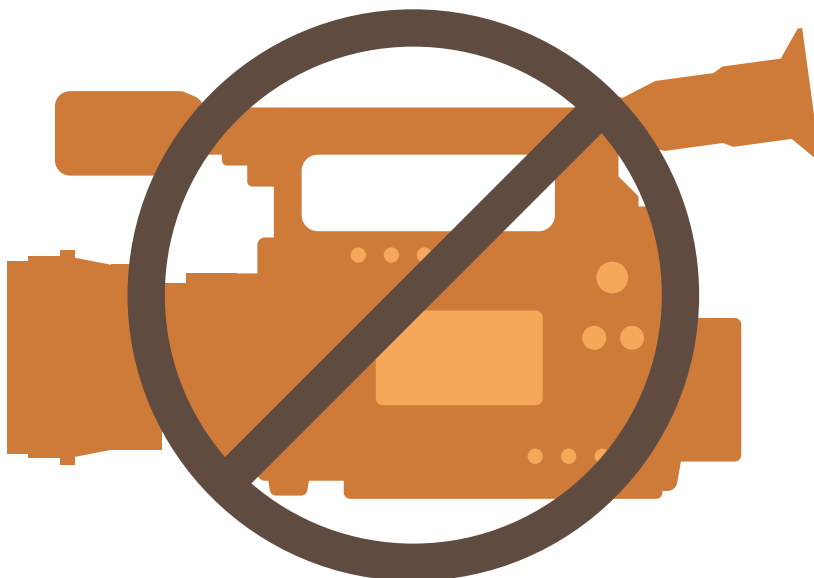
interests, and locations ([bit.ly/2nxjeyN](http://bit.ly/2nxjeyN)). Take an even deeper dive and target people who have expressed an interest in your destination, enjoy a specific hobby or a certain style of food or beverage, or have visited a specific page on your website.

Once you have a solid collection of ad audiences, go ahead and take advantage of the split test and dynamic options in your ad account ([bit.ly/2kCikPm](http://bit.ly/2kCikPm)). These tools will do the heavy lifting and show you which audience responds best to text, headlines, calls to action and visuals.

Then, for the icing on the cake, check your ad relevance score to get a sense of how your ads resonate with your unique audience. This score is found in your Ads Manager/Business Manager account.

The bottom line is this: If you're not making the most of the video tools available, don't waste your time and talent. But when you get the tech and advertising right, you'll be on your way to filling your tours, selling out your events, and maximizing your visitor numbers. 🍷

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](http://cmsspeaking.com).



COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

## A big year for Fredericton's top festivals

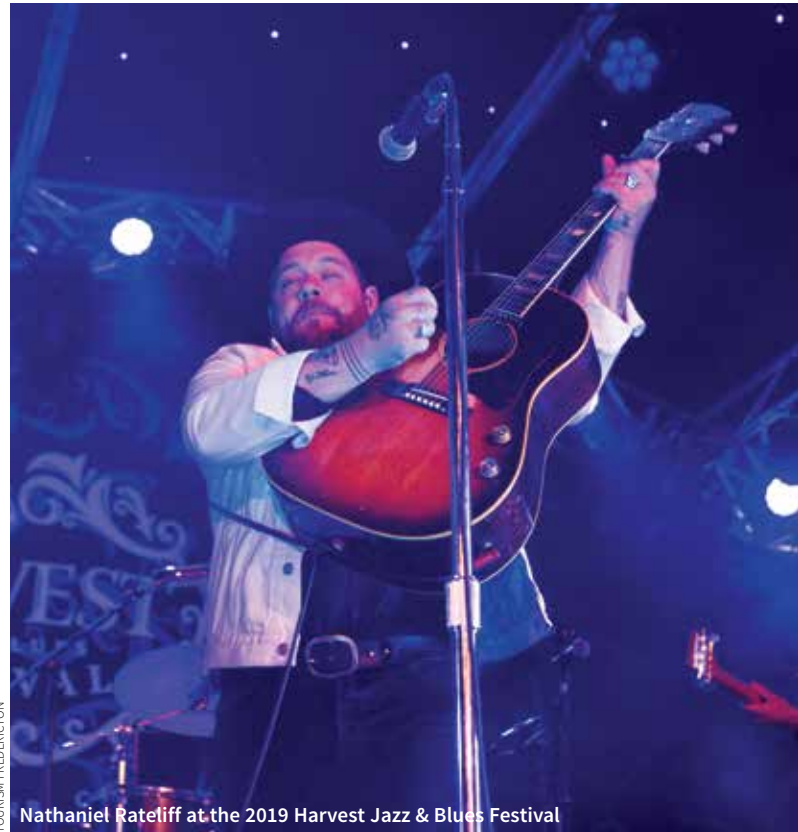
Two annual events in Fredericton, New Brunswick, will mark significant anniversaries in 2020, as the Harvest Jazz & Blues Festival turns 30 and the New Brunswick Spirits Festival celebrates its 25th year.

"Fredericton has several world-class festivals, including the biggest jazz and blues event east of Montréal and the oldest whisky and spirits festival in Canada," says Mary Ellen Hudson of the Tourism Fredericton.

Set for Sept. 15–20, Harvest features a range of musical styles, from gritty acoustic and electric blues to traditional and progressive jazz. Patrons also will see soul, zydeco, and rock acts sprinkled in—Robert Plant headlined in 2019—among the list of international, Canadian, and local performers. More than 25 venues spread over six blocks in downtown Fredericton host the variety of concerts during the weeklong event.

Nearly 200 of the world's finest spirits will be featured at the New Brunswick Spirits Festival, which will take place Nov. 17–20. Attendees can sample single-malt whiskies, scotches, cognacs, rums, gins, and liqueurs, and hear from leading authorities at special tasting and appreciation sessions. Additionally, there will be pairing dinners, master classes, and an on-site vendor area. Frank Scott, the festival's founder and a whisky enthusiast, co-owns Fredericton's popular Lunar Rogue pub, which has a menu of nearly 800 types of spirits.

For more information, email Hudson at [maryellen.hudson@fredericton.ca](mailto:maryellen.hudson@fredericton.ca) or go to [tourismfredericton.ca](http://tourismfredericton.ca).



Nathaniel Rateliff at the 2019 Harvest Jazz & Blues Festival

## A hotbed for fossil research

The sagebrush-covered hills of southwestern Wyoming have long been a mecca for fossil research. Travelers can learn more about the abundant finds—fossilized fish, birds, mammals,

reptiles, insects, and plants—during a visit to Fossil Butte National Monument near Kemmerer.

The visitor center, which is open year-round, has more than 300 specimens on display in its exhibit areas. Many travelers explore the National Park Service-managed site on driving tours, although the road is closed throughout the winter and early spring.

Daily fossil preparation demonstrations are a popular option during the summer. Held in the science lab at the visitor center, these programs outline the tedious and delicate process the park's scientists go through to get fossils ready to be displayed. Rangers also lead the half-hour-long Porch Talks and Timeline Walks during the high season.

At the Research Quarry travelers can get an up-close look at the work of paleontologists and learn how fossils are discovered and collected. They hear about ongoing research, help look for fossils, and record the findings of the day as part of these 90-minute programs that are held from June to September.

The spring and fall are prime times for hiking and wildlife viewing, and cross-country skiing and snowshoeing offer ways to explore during the winter months.

For more information, go to [nps.gov/fobu](http://nps.gov/fobu).



Display at Fossil Butte National Monument

CC FLICKR/MATTHEW DILLON: bit.ly/31JLSR8



*Spirit of Ethan Allen*

VERMONT TOURISM NETWORK

## A Burlington sampler

Situated on Lake Champlain in northwestern Vermont, Burlington is a four-season destination. In addition to brilliant fall foliage, the city offers various types of outdoor adventure—skiing in the winter and water-based fun in the summer—and delivers quality culinary experiences, thanks to its focus on farm-to-table dining.

“When I first visited Vermont, I thought it was only about the mountains, and they are spectacular, but a visit to Lake Champlain in Burlington completely surprised me,” says Karen Ballard of the Vermont Tourism Network. “I learned more about Vermont’s nautical side, and Lake Champlain is the reason.”

She recommends a lunch or sunset cruise around the scenic harbor on the *Spirit of Ethan Allen*. Passengers can enjoy views of the Green Mountains to the southeast and the Adirondacks across the lake in New York to the southwest as they ride around Burlington Bay and listen to stories detailing the region’s heritage, geography, and wildlife.

Travelers heading south of Burlington can discover a unique aspect of local culture during a visit to the UVM Morgan Horse Farm in Middlebury. The Morgan breed is one of the earliest in the U.S., and this working farm is home to around 50 Morgans, which all can trace their bloodline to a single stallion named Figure.

To learn more, email Ballard at [kballard@vtchamber.com](mailto:kballard@vtchamber.com) or go to [vermonttourismnetwork.com](http://vermonttourismnetwork.com).



UVM Morgan Horse Farm

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# Who's HUNGRY?

BY BOB ROUSE

**W**hen you're away from home—and especially when you're trying to stick to a schedule—a meal can resemble a refueling stop. And fuel is fine ... but a meal can be so much more. Experiencing a destination should mean trying it on for size: exploring its streets and paths, opening the doors to its museums and attractions, and listening to its people.

But don't miss a meal: Pull up a chair and taste the local food. Sample a signature dish and sip a local liquid.

We've collected distinctive dishes—the favorite flavors—from eight destinations, so read your way through this menu map. Who's hungry? Hey ... who *isn't*?



## STEAMED CRABS Maryland

Steamed crabs are a staple in Maryland, and a summertime must-do is hand-picking a meal at a waterside crab house and then sampling the succulent, sweet, and tender meat.

Maryland is home to Chesapeake Bay, where generations of watermen have harvested *Callinectes sapidus*, the scientific

name for Chesapeake Bay blue crabs, which means “beautiful swimmer.” Since the 1600s, Marylanders have used crabs as a food source, and through the years, the classic steamed crab has remained a favorite.

The topping of choice is Old Bay, a traditional seasoning.

This mix of crushed pepper, paprika, and celery salt (with other spices) adds flavor and heat to fresh-steamed crabs.

Traditional crab feasts include newspapers spread out on a picnic table, wooden crab mallets, and bibs. The cracking of crabs is a social activity for Marylanders, who can sit for hours and enjoy the bay’s best, dipping the crab meat in melted butter or apple-cider vinegar.

Peak season is from April to the end of November, although crab can be enjoyed through December.

**Where to try it:** Pick one of the many authentic waterside crab houses along Maryland’s Crab & Oyster Trail, including Faidley’s Seafood in Baltimore City.

**Who to contact:** Rich Gilbert,  
Maryland Office of Tourism Development  
[rgilbert@visitmaryland.org](mailto:rgilbert@visitmaryland.org) | [visitmaryland.org/groups](http://visitmaryland.org/groups)



MARYLAND TOURISM

## MUSHROOMS Brandywine Valley, Pennsylvania

Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, is known as the home of Longwood Gardens, which is visited by over a million people a year. But a few miles up the road is another gem: Historic Kennett Square, the “Mushroom Capital of the World.” More than 60% of the United States’ mushroom crop comes from this region.

A day in the area can begin with a visit to The Woodlands at Phillips to learn about mushroom cultivation from one of the country’s largest producers. Then travelers can look for unique gifts, regional specialties, and a variety of fresh-picked mushrooms in Kennett’s charming downtown shops.

Fittingly enough, Kennett Square is the home of the annual Mushroom Festival, which has been voted one of the 10 best festivals in Pennsylvania. The event takes place each September on the weekend following Labor Day, and attendees celebrate with music, rides, and entertainment; taste-test mushroom soups; and learn from the pros about cooking and storing mushrooms.

And New Year’s Eve is marked with the dropping of—you guessed it—a mushroom ... an 8-foot, 700-hundred-pound, illuminated, stainless steel mushroom!

**Where to try it:** Portabello’s, where Chef Brett Hulbert prepares an array of delicacies for mushroom lovers (and others).

**Who to contact:** Courtney Babcock, Brandywine Valley  
[courtney@brandywinevalley.com](mailto:courtney@brandywinevalley.com) | [brandywinevalley.com](http://brandywinevalley.com)



CHRISTA NEU

## AMERICAN BISON Campbell County, Wyoming

According to *Courier's* Campbell County connections, bison meat is one of the most naturally flavorful and healthy red meats available. Also called buffalo, bison meat is lower in fat and higher in protein than beef.

One of the world's oldest and largest bison ranches, the Durham Bison Ranch is located just south of Gillette. Members of the Flocchini family, owners of the ranch, are committed to managing their land and livestock holistically.

To fully enjoy a bison meal, visitors should first take a tour of the ranch to see thousands of majestic animals in their natural environment and learn how the family raises bison and processes the meat. The next step is to visit a restaurant in Gillette, where bison is offered as full steaks (sirloin, ribeye, flank, and other cuts), skewers, sirloin tips, burgers, and Philly sandwiches.

Locals suggest that first-timers order the bison medium rare or rare and wash it down with locally crafted mead served out of a steer horn at Big Lost Meadery or with an award-winning craft brew at Gillette Brewing Company.

**Where to try it:** Prime Rib Restaurant & Wine Cellar, Pokey's Barbecue, Rib & Chop House, and Silvercreek Steakhouse

**Who to contact:** Christen Burdette,  
Campbell County CVB  
[christen@visitgillettewright.com](mailto:christen@visitgillettewright.com) | [visitgillettewright.com](http://visitgillettewright.com)



CC FLICKR/TIM SHEERMAN: CHASE bit.ly/39CpR18

## SPRINGFIELD HORSESHOE SANDWICH Springfield, Illinois

The Springfield Horseshoe Sandwich was created at the Old Leland Hotel in 1928 by Joe Schweska and Steve Tomko. The name was derived from the horseshoe-shaped cut of ham used in the original. French fries represent the nails of the shoe, and the sizzle platter represents a hot anvil.

The 1939 Christmas edition of the *State Journal Register* revealed Chef Schweska's recipe. The sandwich is made by laying two pieces of toast on a preheated platter, then placing the meat on the toast, covering the entire sandwich with cheese sauce, and circling the platter with French fries. A dash of paprika adds color to the Horseshoe.

Variations of the sandwich are as open as a hungry imagination—or as the imaginations of the chefs at local eateries. Most options include substituting ham with another meat: chicken (a grilled, fried, or Buffalo-style breast), hamburger, walleye, tenderloin, or Reuben. And diners with a smaller appetite can order a Pony Shoe.

**Where to try it:** Most Springfield restaurants offer a traditional Shoe and a house specialty or two, including Charlie Parker's famous Breakfast Shoe. D'Arcy's Pint was featured on Guy Fieri's "Diners, Drive-ins and Dives."

**Who to contact:** Terry Truman, Springfield CVB  
[terry.truman@springfield.il.us](mailto:terry.truman@springfield.il.us) | [visitspringfieldillinois.com](http://visitspringfieldillinois.com)



SPRINGFIELD CVB



## UTICA GREENS Oneida County, New York

Utica Greens were not originally chef-prepared restaurant fare. This Italian-American dish, which features garden-grown escarole and pantry staples, such as pickled cherry peppers, Romano cheese, prosciutto, and breadcrumbs, has humble roots.

Beginning in the late 1800s, Utica became home to a thriving community of southern-Italian immigrants, and greens were served at the dinner table of many of these families. The dish was the creation of frugal home cooks who were making do with what they had on hand.

In the 1980s, local chef Joe Morelle included the dish on his restaurant menu as Greens Morelle. It became a hit, and other restaurants adapted and renamed it Utica Greens.

Variations include greens with potatoes, kale, Swiss chard, and pignoli (or pine) nuts. Some restaurants also add spicy peppers to the mix.

**Where to try it:** You can still find the classic Greens Morelle at Chesterfield's Tavolo, located in Utica. Other options are Delmonico's Italian Steakhouse, Babe's at Harbor Point, and Aqua Vino Restaurant, which has an outdoor patio overlooking the Erie Canal.

**Who to contact:** Madison Cermak, Oneida County CVB  
madison@oneidacountytourism.com |  
oneidacountytourism.com



ONEIDA COUNTY CVB

## HATCH CHILES Gallup, New Mexico

Gallup is a premiere place for outstanding New Mexican cuisine. And much of that food features red or green Hatch chile peppers, named for the Hatch Valley region where the peppers are grown.

Situated on I-40 only 30 miles from the Arizona border, this unassuming little town packs big flavors into its dishes. And there are plenty of places to discover them.

Diners can sit down to handmade fresh chile rellenos at

Jerry's Café in the heart of downtown Gallup—or at its bigger (and group friendly) sister location, Don Diego's, located on Route 66. The green chile rellenos, fried with a golden crust, are topped with your choice of red or green Hatch chile sauce. Another option is "Christmas style," which includes both red and green varieties.

Also popular in Gallup is the Hatch chile-smothered burrito, which, due to its size, is best eaten with a fork and knife. Every restaurant in Gallup puts its own spin on the dish, but it's served fresh all day at Railway Café on Route 66, which houses a tribute to the train history of the Gallup area—plus those smothered burritos.

**Where to try it:** Jerry's Café, Don Diego's, Railway Café, and other eateries.

**Who to contact:** Jennifer Lazarz, City of Gallup  
jlazarz@gallupnm.gov | galluprealtrue.com



CITY OF GALLUP

## FLEMISH BEEF STEW AND BELGIAN BEER Flanders-Belgium

Beef stew cooked in beer has long been part of the culinary heritage of Flanders, and it is still one of the most popular stews. The classic local beef stew is known for its sweet-sour combination of caramelized onions and beer: usually a dark Belgian-style ale.

The recipe has varied through the ages, and every mother passes on her secrets to her children. Some like to add liver or kidneys to the beef, which gives the stew a more distinctive flavor. Others prefer a sweeter flavor and add a slice of *pain d'épices* (an old-fashioned bread with honey and spices), or even a slice of country bread spread with a strong mustard. These spicy and sweet flavorings have been an integral part of the Flemish palate and cuisine since the Middle Ages.

Belgium's brewing heritage dates back many centuries and provides influence and inspiration to modern-day brewers. Beer is a part of Belgians' DNA, and the passion of today's wave of innovative craft brewers is redefining how the world perceives Belgian beer.



TOURIST OFFICE FOR FLANDERS-BELGIUM

**Where to try it:** Whether as a home-cooked meal, at a local pub, or at a high-end restaurant, beef stew and beer can be sampled anywhere in the country.

**Who to contact:** Marco Frank, Tourist Office for Flanders-Belgium  
marco.frank@visitflanders.com | visitflanders.com

## SHRIMP Amelia Island, Florida

For more than six decades, nearly 100 shrimp boats have annually docked in Fernandina Beach on Amelia Island. It's the birthplace of the modern shrimping industry (and once considered the shrimping capital of the world), and the people and businesses of Fernandina Beach's historical downtown pull out all the stops for the Isle of Eight Flags Shrimp Festival.

Options for enjoying shrimp sound like a line from "Forrest Gump": grilled shrimp, fried shrimp, Cajun shrimp, boiled shrimp, shrimp tacos, shrimp salad, popcorn shrimp ...

One of the premier festivals in the Southeast—and a part of island life for more than 50 years—the Shrimp Festival brings together the love of shrimp and the best of arts and entertain-

ment. Celebrating the opening of the shrimp season, the event (April 30–May 3 this year) includes a parade plus contests for pirate costumes, ice cream eating, and decorated boats.

Visitors can learn about the celebrated crustaceans year-round at the Fernandina Beach Shrimping Museum, and seasonally, the Amelia River Cruises' two-hour eco-tour takes guests on an interactive exploration in the St. Mary's River Basin.

**Where to try it:** Timoti's Seafood Shak, Lulu's, and The Salty Pelican, to name a few.

**Who to contact:** Gil Langley,  
Amelia Island Tourism Development Council  
glangley@ameliaisland.com |  
ameliaisland.com



DEREYER STUDIOS



# Then was cool, but now is ...

BY KENDALL FLETCHER

**HISTORY IS ALWAYS PRESENT** in a destination—whether it's a town square, a battlefield, a site of an important event, or a unique homestead that once housed a prominent figure. These are highly sought-after attractions for travelers who long to understand how a place came to be by taking a peek back in time.

And while historical homes and gardens are structured to be accessible for the public today, they've undergone many changes over the course of their existences, from ownership to hefty restorations. Here is a look at four NTA members and what makes them historical, beautiful, and enjoyable.

## Hearst Castle

San Simeon, California | [hearstcastle.org](http://hearstcastle.org)

**Then:** The first 40,000 acres of the Hearst Castle ranchland property was acquired by George Hearst in 1865, a purchase that laid the foundation for the exquisite hilltop estate on the central California coast. George's son, William Randolph Hearst, inherited the ranch in 1919, expanded its grounds another 250,000 acres, and built a retreat called La Cuesta Encantada—Spanish for “The Enchanted Hill”—with the help of architect Julia Morgan.

“Hearst and Morgan originally discussed it as being a modest country home built on the site where his parents took him camping as a child, but plans rapidly changed to create a sumptuous, extraordinary estate with breathtaking gardens and architecture, and an impressive art collection,” says Marketing and Communications Director Jim Allen.

The estate, soaring 1,600 feet over the Pacific coastline and surrounded by the Santa Lucia Mountains, has 165 rooms; many acres of lush gardens; and terraces, pools, and

walkways. Parts of the house were built specifically to showcase Hearst's iconic art collection—and the home was quite the gathering place.

La Cuesta Encantada was in a remote locale, though, and as Hearst's health declined, he had to vacate the unfinished home.

“Hearst was a media genius, and his power and vision allowed him to pursue one of the most ambitious architectural endeavors in American history, the result of which can be seen in the magnificent grounds and structures of Hearst Castle today,” Allen says.

**Now:** Located in a California state park, the mansion and grounds are a state historic monument that's open to the public for guided tours.

“In its heyday, only the privileged few could experience the grandeur of Hearst Castle, but today we welcome the public to see, experience, and learn about this fabulous showplace and its extraordinary history,” Allen says. “Mr. Hearst wanted the estate to be a museum of the finest things he could acquire, and for it to become open to the public after his death as a tribute to his mother, Phoebe, who inspired his interests.”

Tours of the castle are offered year-round, and visitors can see Hearst's art collections and antique furniture—more than 20,000 original items, from classical antiquity to Art Deco. One of the most unique pieces is the “Venus Italica,” carved by Antonio Canova in 1802. Napoleon Bonaparte's brother purchased the sculpture, sold it to an English collector, and later, Hearst grabbed it up at an auction in 1930.

The attraction offers free, ample motorcoach parking, and guests can be dropped off at the visitor center entrance, where they'll find food services, a large-screen theater, exhibits, and a gift shop. Allen suggests planning about three hours for a visit to Hearst Castle.

*For more information, contact Allen at [jim.allen@parks.ca.gov](mailto:jim.allen@parks.ca.gov).*



Hearst Castle

COURTESY HEARST CASTLE - CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS - ALL RIGHTS RESERVED





Cheekwood Estate & Gardens

## Cheekwood Estate & Gardens

Nashville, Tennessee | [cheekwood.org](http://cheekwood.org)

**Then:** Swept up in the success of the Industrial Revolution, husband and wife Leslie Cheek and Mabel Wood built Cheekwood Estate & Gardens in 1932. The couple had the travel bug and took their two children on grand adventures all over the world. As they planned their home, they set off for England for several months with architect Bryant Fleming (estate designer for Andrew Carnegie and the like) to study the architecture of English country estates.

They returned to Nashville with antique furnishings and other beautiful things to fill their 36-room house. The family fortune originated partly in the Cheek-Neal Coffee Company, creators and brewers of Maxwell House Coffee & Tea. It is said that President Theodore Roosevelt exclaimed the coffee was “good to the last drop!”

Family lore has it that the concept of the house came from a promise Leslie made to his wife, who owned a gilt mirror that was too tall for their previous home. They would either sell the mirror or build a house to fit it. The latter option won out, and the two combined their family names to make “Cheekwood,” built to reflect affluence with a stately home and botanical gardens surrounded by untouched land. The family enjoyed throwing lavish parties and entertaining celebrities in the home and riding their horses on the grounds.

**Now:** The Cheeks’ daughter, Huldah, was deeded the estate when Mabel passed away in 1946. She inhabited the home with her husband, Walter, and daughter, Leslie,

and in 1957, the family moved to make Cheekwood a public garden and fine arts center. Cheekwood opened its gates to the public on May 31, 1960.

In 2017, the mansion underwent a major restoration to reflect the time period of Leslie Sr. and Mabel’s lives in the 1930s. Because of the conservation efforts established by the parks surrounding Cheekwood, it’s one of few examples of American Country Place-era estates that maintains its original, undisturbed views.

Cheekwood is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, and part of the festivities includes the opening of the Bracken Foundation Children’s Garden and re-opening The Ann & Monroe Carell Jr. Family Sculpture Trail as well as Shōmu-en, Blevins Japanese Garden after major enhancements. The attraction will also display the colorful “Chihuly at Cheekwood” April 25 through Nov. 1.

*For more information, contact Amanda Bjorklund at [grouptours@cheekwood.org](mailto:grouptours@cheekwood.org).*

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## Middleton Tourism Commission – The Rowley House

Middleton, Wisconsin | [visitmiddleton.com](http://visitmiddleton.com)

**Then:** Dr. Newman C. Rowley built his two-story home in 1868 for a mere \$800 on Hubbard Avenue in Middleton, a suburb of Madison, the state capital. Constructed with 30,000 yellow-clay bricks, the house fits a building style common to rural Wisconsin in the 19th century: gabled ell, a residential vernacular form with stone lintels and sills and a mostly plain façade, with the exception of the porch's ornamental brackets and turned posts.

Dr. Rowley died in 1871, but he set in motion the Rowley House legacy. It went on to be home to his son, Dr. Antinous A. Rowley, and later his grandson, Dr. Antinous G. "A.G." Rowley. While the house long served as an abode for physicians in the Middleton area, Dr. A.G. Rowley only lived there a few years while practicing medicine. His sister, Arlene Rowley Morhoff, took up residence in the home until her death in 1988. It was transferred to the Middleton Area Historical Society in 1989 when Arlene's son, Dan Morhoff, inherited and sold the house.

**Now:** The Rowley House Museum, a Middleton landmark, was placed on the National Registry of Historic Places in 1999.

"Remembering our history is as important as celebrating it, and the Rowley House Museum allows for both," says Julie Peterman, director of tourism for the Middleton Tourism



Rowley House Museum

MIDDLETON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Commission. "The museum invites visitors to step through Middleton's past, not just by viewing old antiques but also by walking through a beautifully preserved home that has been at the center of our charming downtown for more than 150 years."

When getting the grounds in shape to make the attraction what it is today, the historical society volunteers replaced the front and back porches, built a carriage house, and revamped the kitchen and a bathroom.

The Rowley House is one of the oldest residences in Middletown, and inside its now-museum walls are Native American artifacts, settler antiques and furnishings, and a variety of Depression-era glass wares. The house is open to the public for limited hours on Tuesdays and Saturdays mid-April through mid-October.

For more information, contact Peterman at [jpeterman@cityofmiddleton.us](mailto:jpeterman@cityofmiddleton.us).



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## Boone Hall Plantation

Mount Pleasant, South Carolina | [boonehallplantation.com](http://boonehallplantation.com)

**Then:** Boone Hall's story began in 1681, when Major John Boone of England founded the plantation and built a two-story wooden farmhouse (typical of Charleston area plantations) on the grounds. His family bore five generations that resided there until the Horlbeck brothers purchased the property in 1817, and five generations of their family were raised there, too.

The Stone family purchased it in 1935, tore down the old farmhouse, and built a 10,000-square-foot Colonial Revival-style mansion. The McRae family acquired it in 1955 and opened it to the public.

**Now:** Boone Hall is considered one of the oldest farms in the U.S. and remains a working plantation, producing more than 150 acres of fruits and vegetables and colorful gardens. The oldest remaining structure is the smokehouse, built in the 1750s, and visitors can also see a brick structure designed for a cotton gin and nine late-1700s dwellings that housed slaves.

When they come to Boone Hall Plantation, guests enter through the lovely Avenue of Oaks, a nearly mile-long driveway hugged by giant oak trees, which are more than 275 years old and draped with Spanish moss.

Guided tours of the first floor of the home reveal antique



Avenue of Oaks at Boone Hall Plantation

furnishings and stories of the lives of a coastal Carolina planter's family and his guests, and visitors can also take a 30-minute wagon tour of the property. Morrical says they can expect a diverse experience that is entertaining, educational, and at times emotional.

"A must-see is the 'Exploring the Gullah Culture' presentation, where direct descendants of the Gullah people tell their story through a moving performance," he says. "Many visitors have stated that is one of the best experiences they have encountered on their visit to the Charleston area."

This performance is seasonal and takes place from mid-February through the fall.

For more information, contact Morrical at [adamm@boonehallplantation.com](mailto:adamm@boonehallplantation.com).



Trinidad History Museum



El Pueblo History Museum



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# Active on the outside, artsy on the inside

BY KENDALL FLETCHER

## When you say Asheville, we say adventure.

WELL KNOWN for many thriving scenes in its bustling, beautiful downtown, Asheville also offers thrilling adventures outside its city limits.

“We are truly fortunate to have adventure at our fingertips. So many possibilities await, quite literally, in our backyard here in the Blue Ridge,” says Explore Asheville’s Sarah Lowery. “Guided hikes, SUP (stand-up paddleboarding), and whitewater rafting all make for great group activities.”

Here are some of the outdoor adventures Lowery recommends:

**Hiking** Former National Geographic “Adventurer of the Year” and Appalachian Trail record-setter Jennifer Pharr Davis will lead guided day trips to the Great Smoky Mountains this year with the Blue Ridge Hiking Company. She’ll also head up several new private

group options combining half-day hikes with activities like jewelry-making and beer tastings. The day hikes offer gorgeous views of waterfalls and mountains from trails that extend from the Blue Ridge Parkway, and groups can take sunset hikes as well.

**Paddleboarding** Wai Mauna’s paddleboards fit six people and can serve groups of up to 40. Guided trips take stand-up paddleboarders down the French Broad River, one of the oldest rivers in the world. All paddle tours are private and can wind through the River Arts District or the NTA-member Biltmore Estate.

Along with seeing the magnificent Biltmore House, visitors to the estate can discover unique outdoor adventure on its 8,000 acres.

For more information, contact Beth McKinney at [bmckinney@exploreasheville.com](mailto:bmckinney@exploreasheville.com) or go to [exploreasheville.com](http://exploreasheville.com).

**Horseback riding** Guided rides on horseback take riders on trails through the estate’s woodlands and meadows, and private rides for one to four guests are offered as well.

**Biking** The estate is home to more than 20 miles of freely accessible bike trails—from flat, paved trails along the French Broad River to woodland dirt paths. Guests can visit Biltmore’s Bike Barn and rent mountain bikes, hybrid bikes, Trail-a-Bikes, and trailers, or bring their own along.

**Land Rover-ing** This experience takes visitors through off-road obstacles in a Land Rover. One option lets a professional instructor lead the adventure over broken bridges, large boulders and rocks, and steep hills, and others put the guest at the wheel with a customized experience to fit the driver’s skill level.

Paddleboarding on the French Broad River



Hiking at Black Balsam Knob





Village Potters

## When you say Asheville, we say arts.

According to Asheville CVB's Sarah Lowery, the arts scene is quite a buzzing hive.

"Long known as an arts colony with connections to the American Craft Revival and mid-20th century avant-garde movements, the area features hundreds of folk and fine artists, performance venues, colorful arts neighborhoods, lively music halls, galleries, and myriad events that celebrate creativity," she says. "Street performers entertain crowds on nearly every corner of downtown. The city's rich architectural legacy, with its mix of Art Deco, Beaux Arts, and Neoclassical styles, is a fitting retro-urban backdrop for the collaborative, artistic energy that permeates every sector of local life."

Just outside of downtown Asheville is the River Arts District, where more than 200 artists are established inside former industrial and historical buildings along the French Broad River. Art lovers can find works in paint, pencil, metal, fiber, and other mediums, and they can see the district through walking tours led by artists with Asheville Art Studio Tours.

"Visitors enjoy strolling through the district from gallery to gallery and

interacting with the artists while they work. With an eye toward the future of their crafts, many local artists also keep a strong foothold in Southern Appalachian traditions, such as basket-weaving, quilting, woodwork, wildcrafting, and pottery," Lowery says. "The area is also home to restaurants, breweries, theaters, music venues, and outdoor-recreation outposts."

Here are a few of Asheville's artsy stops recommended by Lowery:

**Village Potters** The DIY workshop "Get Your Hands Dirty" puts visitors at the (potter's) wheel to create a functional piece to take home after firing. The workshop is great for team-building and other large groups, and the experience can be customized.

**Arts District Elevated** The River Arts District will be even more visitor-friendly when a major roadway and greenway construction is completed this year. New to the area will be a multiuse riverside path, additional parking, wider sidewalks, bike lanes, improved traffic flow, and public art installations from the district's resident artists.

**Groewood Village** Described by Lowery as a hidden gem, this 11-acre campus includes Groewood Gallery, nine working-artist studios, a sculpture garden, the North Carolina Homespun Museum, and Asheville's only antique car museum. Biltmore Industries began at this site in 1917 and became the largest producer of hand-woven wool in the world by 1930.



Groewood Village





Biltmore House

## Built for hospitality BY JEFF QUIRE

No discussion of American historical homes and gardens is complete without mention of Biltmore in Asheville. My wife, Drue, and I recently had the opportunity to visit the estate.

Our experience started with check-in at The Inn on Biltmore Estate, which offers luxurious accommodations, first-class dining, and gorgeous views of the natural surroundings.

After settling in, we took a walk down to Antler Hill Village, where visitors can enjoy several dining and shopping options. There is also another lodging option there, Village Hotel on Biltmore Estate. We grabbed a table at Cedric's Tavern, where I enjoyed some top-notch fish and chips, accompanied by live music (and when asked, yes, you want the pretzel rolls).

After a supremely restful night, we went downstairs to The Dining Room for breakfast. I don't typically go the buffet route, but I couldn't resist ... and I have no regrets. The selection of made-to-order omelets, waffles, and other items was worth the dietary splurge.

Next up was the centerpiece, Biltmore House, which we traveled to via a convenient shuttle. The home, the largest private residence in the U.S., is both sublime in scale and exquisite in its attention to detail. Each room has its own story to tell, and each is furnished and decorated as it would have been at the start of the 20th century.

The available self-paced audio guide was a perfect virtual tour guide through the many rooms on the tour, giving us a glimpse of the daily lives of the family, their guests, and employees. We also found the on-site human guides quite knowledgeable when questions arose.

In addition to the home itself, the Frederick Law Olmsted-designed gardens and grounds are works of art in their own right. Although it was winter when we visited and the outdoor gardens weren't in bloom, the indoor Conservatory delivered an eye-popping array of flowers, plants, and trees from a variety of

climates. In April and May, the Biltmore Blooms self-guided tour highlights the ever-changing blossoms in the gardens.

From the house and gardens, we caught another shuttle back to Antler Hill Village to wrap up our day with wine tastings at Biltmore Winery, the most visited winery in the U.S. I'm no expert by any means, but I enjoyed our selections, and it appeared that they have something to complement any cuisine or to suit any palate.

There are many other available activities at the estate, including specialty tours, horseback riding, bicycling, falconry, kayaking, and more. There is also the Farmyard, where kids (or adults, if you're like us) can meet and pet a variety of farm animals.

Biltmore continues to carry out the 1888 vision of George W. Vanderbilt III, respecting the beauty and traditions of old, while implementing new innovations and features to provide guests an experience they will not soon forget.

To learn more about the Biltmore Estate, visit [biltmore.com](http://biltmore.com) or contact Leslie Brewer at [lbrewer@biltmore.com](mailto:lbrewer@biltmore.com). 



Visitors taste a variety of wines at Biltmore Winery

PHOTOS: BILTMORE





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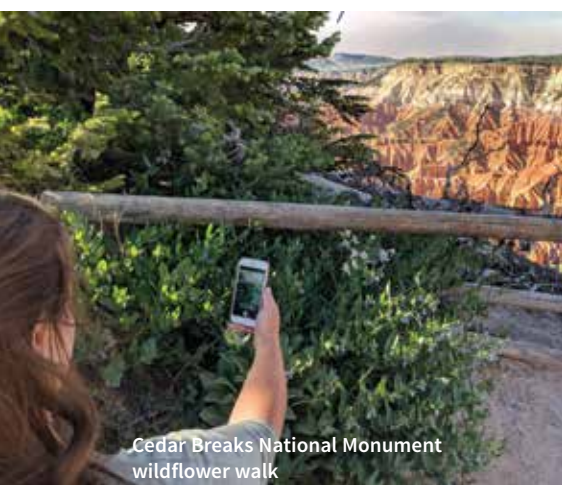
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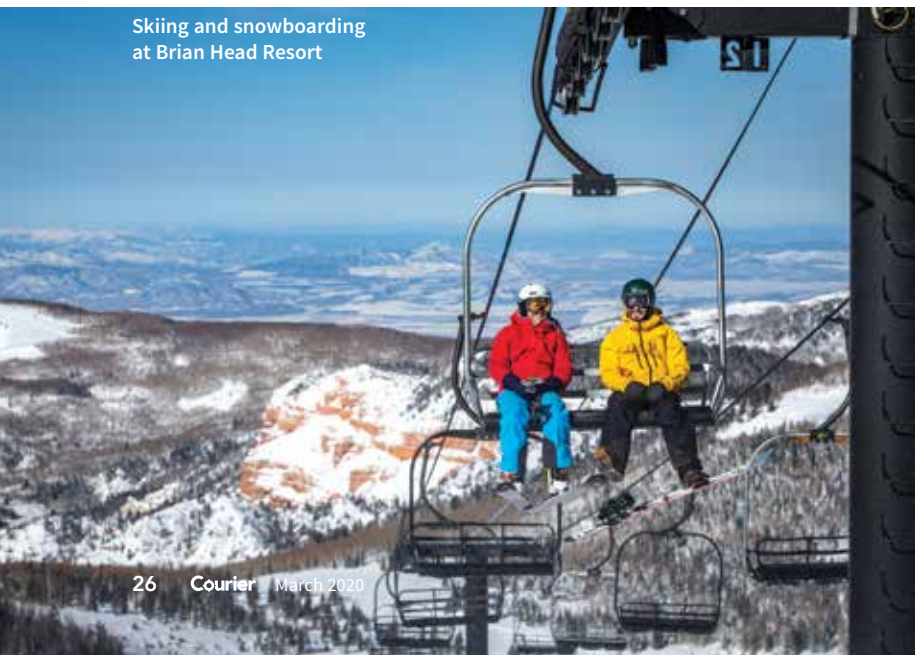
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wildflower walk



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Skiing and snowboarding  
at Brian Head Resort

### Captivating Cedar City

"Cedar City is a hip mountain town that has world-class cultural attractions—like the Tony Award-winning Utah Shakespeare Festival—and is in [close] proximity to Utah's stunning national parks and monuments," says Maria Twitchell, executive director of Visit Cedar City•Brian Head.

With Zion and Bryce national parks leading the way, the natural attractions are the area's, well, main attractions. Twitchell notes that travelers have plenty of options for outdoor adventure awaiting them beyond those big two parks, though.

"Paved trails weave the perimeter of our town, connecting you to the great outdoors and miles of recreational paths for mountain biking, hiking, and off-highway vehicle riding," she says.

With more than 200 miles of downhill paths in Brian Head and 50-plus miles of trails around Cedar City, the area is a mecca for mountain bikers. The 32-mile Virgin River Rim cross country trail rolls through the Dixie National Forest and Kolob Canyon, and the chairlifts at Brian Head take cyclists to the starting points for the Bunker Creek and Sydney Peaks rides.

The dirt roads and paths in the Dixie Forest also provide a prime spot for some of the best OHV riding in the state. Local outfitters such as Brian Head Outdoor Adventure rent out vehicles and can suggest routes.

For those ready to hit the trails on foot, both easy nature walks and moderate to strenuous hikes await. Whatever visitors choose, they will have views of mountains, buttes, and possibly hoodoos. At Cedar Breaks National Monument, daily ranger-led walks go through wildflower-laden meadows and to scenic overlooks. Other popular hiking spots are the Bristlecone Pine Trail, the Navajo Lake Loop, and the Cascade Falls Trail.

Twitchell also recommends the walk to Kanarra Falls, a slot canyon that's home to two waterfalls. An advance permit is required, though, as the trail to Kanarra is limited to 150 hikers per day.

And, when the winter months roll in, Brian Head Resort is a popular spot for skiers and snowboarders.

To learn more, contact Twitchell at [mtwitchell@ironcounty.net](mailto:mtwitchell@ironcounty.net) or go to [scenicsouthernutah.com](http://scenicsouthernutah.com).



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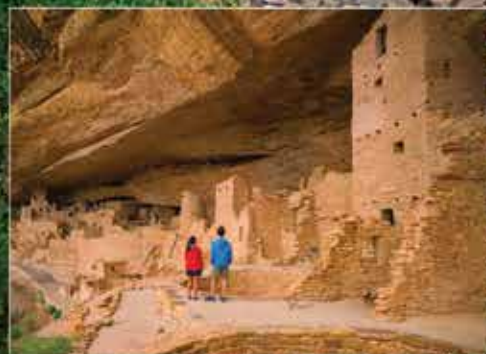
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El Pueblo History Museum



History Colorado Center

HISTORY COLORADO

## Catching up with History Colorado

An NTA tour supplier member, History Colorado manages nine attractions across the Rocky Mountain State with a dual mission of presentation and preservation.

“For over 140 years we have offered access to Colorado’s history through cultural and heritage resources like our museums and historical sites statewide,

as well as through programs for families and adults, stewardship of Colorado’s historical treasures, and resources for students and teachers,” says Zach Werkowitch, History Colorado’s community relations director. “We believe in making Colorado’s history accessible and in creating opportunities that connect

people to the state.”

There are a lot of things on tap at its group of museums and historical sites this year and in early 2021, including the following three new exhibits.


This fall, the El Pueblo History Museum will debut “Steel City: 1980–2004.” Through photographs, artifacts, and displays, the exhibition focuses on the resilience of steelworkers and the Pueblo community from struggle to triumph during industry crises of the late-20th century.

Located in downtown Denver’s Golden Triangle Creative District, the History Colorado Center will welcome a fine arts show featuring works from Gregg Deal. The Paiute artist’s paintings that reimagine Norman Rockwell’s “Four Freedoms,” will be on display starting in the fall. That exhibit will coincide with the opening of “American Democracy,” which is part of the Smithsonian’s traveling series.

“An award-winning hub of learning and entertainment, the History Colorado Center houses core exhibits along with special exhibitions through our Smithsonian affiliation,” Werkowitch adds.

The third offering will celebrate the bicentennial of the Santa Fe Trail. This legendary route, which went through southern Colorado, connected the United States with the newly independent Republic of Mexico. The Trinidad History Museum will be the site for this new exhibition, which is set to launch in early 2021.

To learn more, reach out to Werkowitch at zach.werkowitch@state.co.us or go to [historycolorado.org](http://historycolorado.org).

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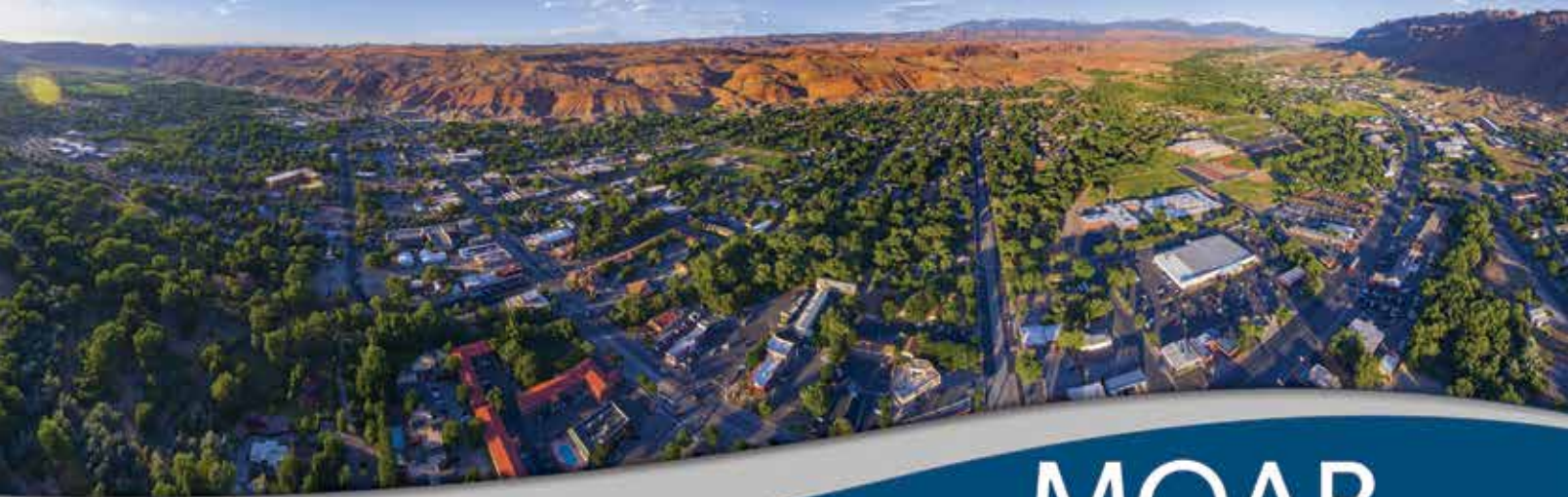
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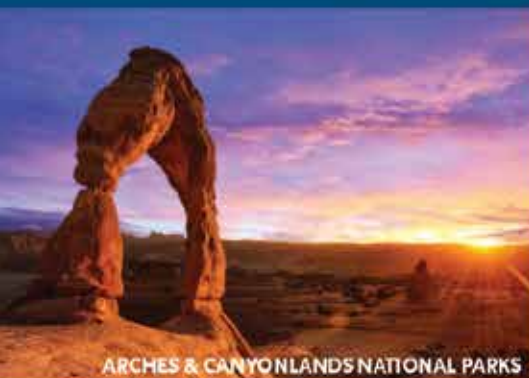
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Inspiring adventurers and entrepreneurs alike, Moab is also a great destination for conventions, reunions, weddings, and group tours. With a constantly expanding array of lodging options and meeting spaces, Moab is a perfect location for corporate meetings, team-building and leadership retreats. A typical day can include sunrise in the park, early morning biking, hiking, yoga or climbing followed by meetings in the afternoon. Top off the day with a scenic boat ride on the Colorado River and fine dining.



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Sedona night sky

## Starry, starry Sedona night

Tucked away in the mountains of northern Arizona, Sedona is a thriving arts and outdoor community. The city also is a hot spot for stargazing, which is evidenced by the fact that it was named an International Dark Sky Community by the International Dark-Sky Association in 2014.

"When the sun goes down and Sedona's red rocks are blanketed by darkness, it's possible to watch a heavenly light show and see the entire galaxy on the right night," says Jennifer Wesselhoff, president/CEO of the Sedona Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Bureau. "Sedona's skies are free of most of the light pollution that blocks stargazing in large cities, plus our 4,500-foot elevation decreases the air space between viewers and space."

During the night sky experiences, which are led by professional astronomers, participants get an overview of planets, galaxies, star clusters, and nebula, and can see them through large powerful telescopes. Programs also can be tailored to specific themes or interests.

"Participants meet the expert at the agreed-upon location, and the tour begins with an overview of the

constellations using a high-power laser pointer," says Wesselhoff. "Our local astronomers are exceptionally knowledgeable and provide an educational and entertaining experience."

Some of the places to take in the dark skies are Fay Canyon Trail, Marg's Draw Trailhead, and Thunder Mountain Trailhead. Fay Canyon is known as a good spot to see shooting stars and Marg's Draw, which includes iconic Snoopy Rock, provides a scenic wilderness backdrop.

"You'll come for a captivating sunset at Thunder Mountain, but you'll stay for the unforgettable 360° view of the Sedona starscape," adds Wesselhoff.

And, the good news is that the conditions are always right—no matter the month—for taking in the splendor of the night sky.

"Sedona's haze-free, cloud-free skies make stargazing possible most nights of the year, and the transparency of the desert air, because it is free of humidity, increases visibility," Wesselhoff adds.

To find out more, email the bureau's Sachiko Sado at [sado@sedonachamber.com](mailto:sado@sedonachamber.com) or go to [visitsedona.com](http://visitsedona.com).





Acoma Pueblo



Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta



San Miguel Mission, Santa Fe

## The ABCs of New Mexico: Acoma, balloons, and culture

For more than two decades, Sheli Armstrong has been showing off her backyard—New Mexico—to travelers from across the globe. Her company, Destination Southwest, specializes in single- and multi-day tours featuring the state.

“New Mexico is one of those unassuming destinations that people don’t realize is so unique and beautiful,” she says. “Nowhere else in the States do you have the type of cultural and historical heritage as we do here in New Mexico. We take great pride in our arts, architecture, cuisine, and landscapes.”

Three of her day trips feature unique destinations in the state: Acoma Pueblo, Santa Fe, and Tent Rocks.

Known as Sky City because of its location on a massive sandstone mesa at 7,000 feet, Acoma Pueblo was founded around 1150 AD. Visitors can see this historical village, which is the oldest continuously occupied settlement in the U.S., on a tour with an Acoma native.

The Santa Fe program includes a walking tour of the city’s central plaza, where travelers see Loretto Chapel, the St. Francis Cathedral, and the San Miguel Mission. The third tour features Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument and its fascinating cone-shaped rock formations.

For those seeking a deeper—and longer—dive into local culture, Destination Southwest offers a four-day itinerary featuring southern New Mexico. Highlights include visits to Lincoln County, Mesilla, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, and White Sands National Park.

“But our absolute best-selling and most popular tour package is the Albuquerque International Balloon

Fiesta Tour,” Armstrong says, adding that five- and seven-day options are available. “Few spectacles on earth rival the Mass Ascension, as hundreds of hot air balloons lift off from Balloon Fiesta Park to drift in the crisp early morning high-desert air.”

The company also offers itineraries that include neighboring states, which Armstrong says lends to a richer understanding of the American Southwest.

“Before New Mexico was a state, this whole region shared in culturally and historically significant events that helped shaped what the Four Corners states have become,” she says. “While New Mexico is our pride and joy, you don’t get the whole story of the Southwest without visiting the whole region.”

To learn more, email Armstrong at [sheli@destination southwest.com](mailto:sheli@destination southwest.com) or go to [destination southwest.com](http://destination southwest.com). ☺

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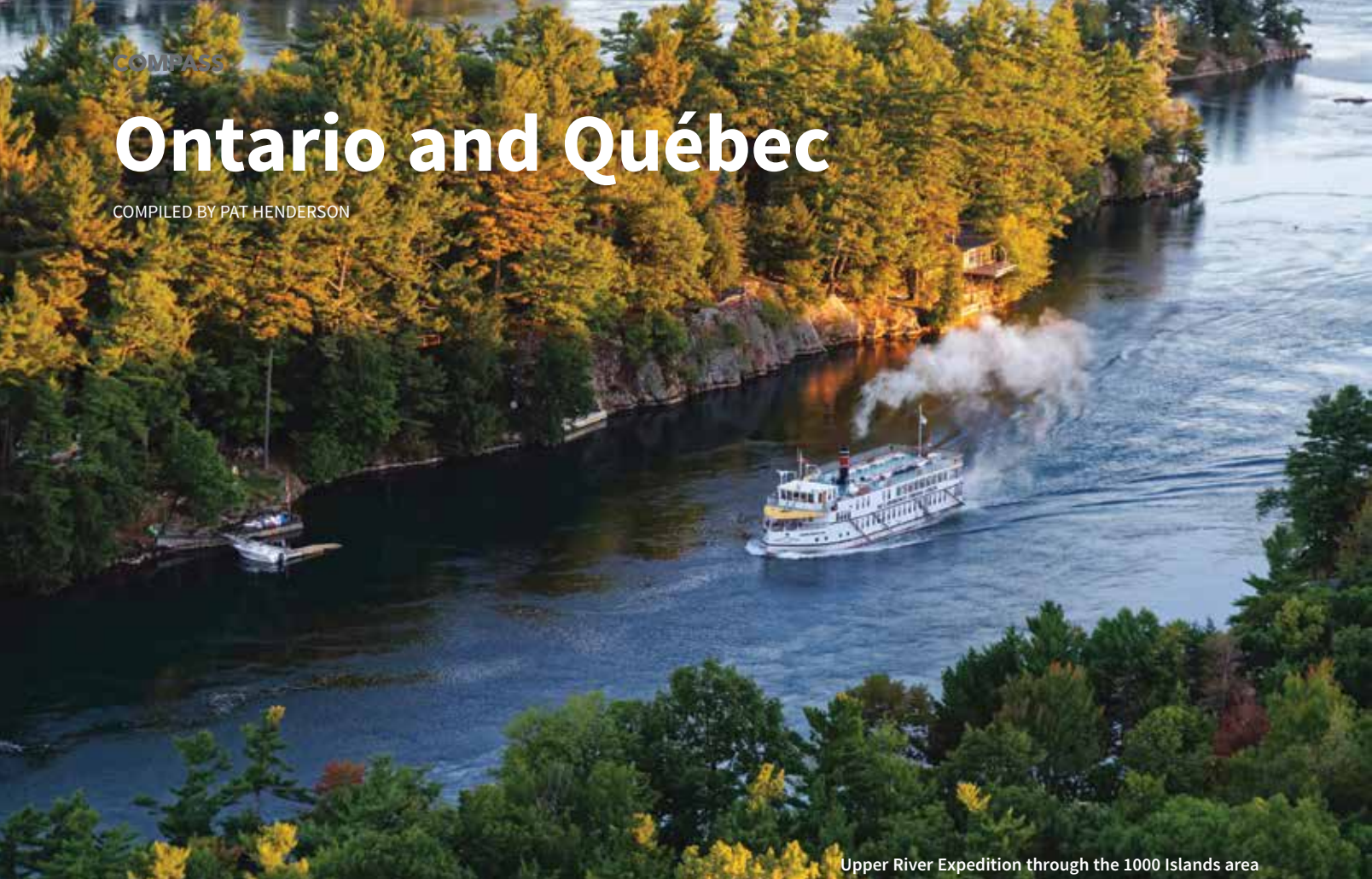
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# Ontario and Québec

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON



Upper River Expedition through the 1000 Islands area

## Sailing along the St. Lawrence

Passengers that take a trip with St. Lawrence Cruise Lines are following in the footsteps of early explorers, who first traveled to Ontario and Québec via the St. Lawrence River.

"All of the communities we visit along the river, from small hamlets to the international Port of Montréal, were built up due to their place on the river, and that relationship will become clear as the journey unfolds," says Daniel Beals, marketing coordinator for the Kingston, Ontario-based cruise company that turns 40 this year. "The river is absolutely breathtaking, and guests will be able to see the culture change from French to English along its length—all while enjoying the comfort and hospitality of the *Canadian Empress* and her crew."



Through the locks

The company's river cruises connect Kingston to Montréal, Québec City, Ottawa, and Ontario's 1000 Islands region. Itineraries range from four to seven nights and are offered during the May-to-October season.

True to its name, Canada's Capital Cruise highlights the nation's political center, Ottawa. The five-night journey requires a smaller vessel, since it transitions through the locks from the St. Lawrence to the Ottawa River. As they follow the river toward the capital city, passengers can get a feel for French and English cultures, with Québec being on the northern banks and Ontario on the southern shores.

Another of St. Lawrence Cruise Lines' most requested itineraries is the four-night Upper River Expedition that showcases the 1000 Islands region. The area, shared between Canada and the United States, was a playground for the rich and famous in the 1800s and 1900s. Passengers can see historical estates and cottages as they go past the charming port towns.

"This year we are introducing a brand-new itinerary called the Seaway Discovery Cruise," says Beals. "The focus of this unique trip is the engineering marvels of the lock system and the history of trade and cooperation that is shared by Canada and the United States."

The five-night cruise goes from Kingston to Cornwall, Ontario, and back, with departures on June 6 and June 11.

To learn more, email Beals at [danielbeals@stlawrencecruiselines.com](mailto:danielbeals@stlawrencecruiselines.com) or go to [stlawrencecruiselines.com](http://stlawrencecruiselines.com).





Érablière Le Chemin du Roy



Tapped maple tree

## As sweet as Québec sugar

The popular idiom “looks can be deceiving” has some applicability to longtime NTA member Autocar Excellence, Excellence Charter. As its name implies, the Québec-based company does have a fleet of vehicles and specializes in transportation, but that doesn’t tell the whole story.

“Our family has been involved in the group tour business with our motorcoaches since the 1970s, but in 1991 we had an opportunity to buy a genuine maple sugar shack from the famous hockey player, Guy Lafleur,” says Claudia Boissonneault, the company’s vice president of sales and marketing. “Érablière Le Chemin du Roy is a typical sugar shack that’s located right in the middle of a maple grove and very close to Québec City. I think we have the one of most precious pieces of local history here.”

The original sugar shack was built in 1920, and it is still an

active syrup-making site. During the March-to-April season a number of options are available, including production tours, meals, fresh maple taffy tasting, a musician who plays traditional songs, and more.

Chemin du Roy is open the rest of the year, too, and a visit includes a presentation about the maple syrup-making process and the history of the property. Following the tour, travelers sit down for a homemade meal and can enjoy live entertainment. The activity usually takes about two hours, depending on the group size.

“Maple syrup has always been part of our lives as French-Canadians, and it is important to keep our traditions alive, even in this modern era,” adds Boissonneault.

To learn more, email Boissonneault at [claudiab@tourcar.com](mailto:claudiab@tourcar.com) or go to [sugarshackquebec.com](http://sugarshackquebec.com).

## Getting cryptic in Old Québec

Four centuries of Canadian heritage are on display at Saint-Louis Forts and Châteaux National Historic Site in Québec City. The attraction, an iconic piece of Old Québec, includes an archaeological crypt and the remains of the city’s first château, where major decisions impacting the lives of Canadians were made.

On the Under the Terrace: A Château tour, available from mid-May to early November, travelers can learn about this fascinating part of the site. The 45-minute guided program heads below Dufferin Terrace to the structure that served as an official residence and the seat of power of governors from 1620 to 1834. Visitors hear tales of daily life at the castle and can see more than 100 artifacts found during archaeological digs across the years.

Another option at Saint-Louis Forts and Châteaux is the Grand Tour package. This expanded program includes Under the Terrace, three other guided tours, and high tea in the afternoon. The additional walks highlight fortifications in Old Québec, Artillery Park, and the life of Lord Dufferin.

All tours at the historical site are available in both English and French.

To learn more, email Parks Canada’s Jennifer Burnell at [jennifer.burnell@canada.ca](mailto:jennifer.burnell@canada.ca) or go to [pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/qc/saintlouisforts](http://pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/qc/saintlouisforts).



PARKS CANADA

The crypt under Dufferin Terrace



# Africa

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

## From pharaohs and hippos to Mandela and Mercury

With Egypt in the north and South Africa at the lower tip, Africa is a fascinating continent with endless ways for visitors to connect with its diverse destinations. The natural beauty and cultural riches are on display as travelers explore the different regions of the continent. Here is a look at six African nations and the NTA members who specialize in these intriguing countries:

### Egypt

*In-country partner:* Egyptian Educational Travel (EET)

*Company overview:* Egypt is a place that is steeped in the religious traditions of three Abrahamic faiths—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam—and EET offers faith-based tours highlighting each. The company also covers the country's renowned cultural and historical sites.

*Sample tour:* As part of the company's Pyramids and Pharaohs itinerary, travelers spend 12 days exploring Cairo, the Great Pyramids, Luxor, Karnak, and the Valley of the Kings. A four-night luxury cruise on the Nile is included.

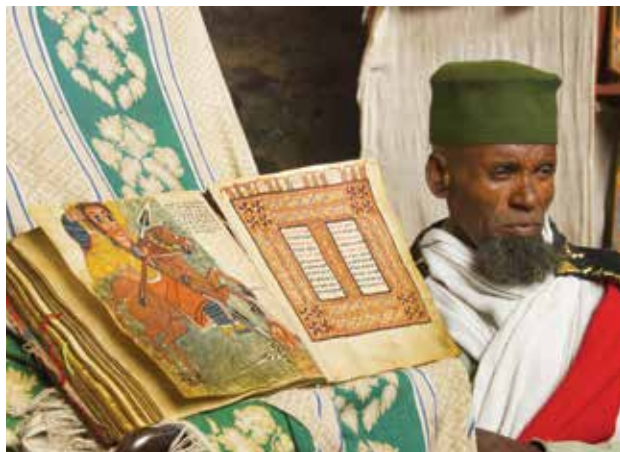
*Country fun fact:* In addition to its ancient sites, Egypt is a hotbed for snorkeling. The Red Sea, along the country's east coast, is home to a number of top diving spots, including ones near the town of Sharm El Sheikh.

*To learn more, email Romani Gaballa at [romani@egyptianedutavel.com](mailto:romani@egyptianedutavel.com) or go to [egyptianedutavel.com](http://egyptianedutavel.com).*



Great Sphinx of Giza

EGYPTIAN EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL



Manuscript at the Monastery of Na'akueto La'ab near Lalibela

CC FLICKR/ADAVEY: bitly/z5itabr

### Ethiopia

*In-country partner:* Ghion Travel and Tours

*Company overview:* Through the company's religious, adventure, cultural, and educational tours, travelers can discover Ethiopia's riches. Special-event packages include tours based on the Meskel Festival in Addis Ababa (late September) and Christmas and Easter celebrations at Lalibela.

*Sample tour:* The nine-day Northern Historic Route Tour of Ethiopia takes participants to the country's renowned monuments, edifices, and churches that date back centuries. Featured stops are the 11 rock churches of Lalibela, UNESCO-recognized Gonder Castle, Lake Tana, the Blue Nile Gorge, and Addis Ababa.

*Country fun fact:* Coffee is a staple of Ethiopian life, and visitors can take part in a traditional coffee ceremony—an important ritual signifying friendship. And, yeh, they get to sample the local Joe.

*To learn more, email Yoseph Getnet Teshale at [info@ghiontour.com](mailto:info@ghiontour.com) or go to [toughion.com](http://toughion.com).*

### Kenya

*In-country partner:* Globetrotters Travel and Tour

*Company overview:* Globetrotters provides land arrangements for groups touring Africa, Europe, and Australasia, with a focus on religious pilgrimages, special-interest tours, and unique experiences. Peter Craddick is based in Mombasa, and he coordinates the company's African programs.

*Sample tour:* The Kenyan wildlife and coast are combined on a six-day tour. The bulk of the time is spent at four different game reserves: Maasai Mara National Reserve, Hells Gate National Park, Amboseli National Park, and Taita Hills. The program concludes with a relaxing day alongside the Indian Ocean at Mombasa's Diani Beach.

*Country fun fact:* Speaking of Diani Beach, that area is a great place for kitesurfing. Adventurers can take advantage of the consistent, reliable winds and soar above the clear blue lagoon, reef, and nearby forests.

*To learn more, email Peter Craddick at [peter.craddick@gtnt.com](mailto:peter.craddick@gtnt.com) or go to [gtnt.com](http://gtnt.com).*

Cheetahs in the wild



GLOBETROTTERS TRAVEL &amp; TOURS

## South Africa

*In-country partner:* Embrace South Africa Tours

*Company overview:* The company takes travelers on behind-the-scenes, deep-dive experiences throughout South Africa. Tours connect visitors with locals and help them discover the country's natural beauty, historical sites, faith traditions, culinary scenes, and the story of Mandela.

*Sample tour:* South Africa—A Beautiful Mix is a 12-day sampler that covers a lot of ground. Time is split between the Cape Town and the Johannesburg areas, and highlights include visits to Table Mountain, Robben Island, the Cape Winelands, the Johannesburg Apartheid Museum, and Soweto. The package also includes a two-day safari near Pretoria.

*Country fun fact:* In addition to being home to the Big Five safari animals, South Africa is one of only a few nations with a large penguin population. Boulders Beach, located just south of Cape Town, is home to a colony of African penguins.

*To learn more, email Deon Kitching at [deonkit@mweb.co.za](mailto:deonkit@mweb.co.za) or go to [embracesouthafricatours.com](http://embracesouthafricatours.com).*



PAT HENDERSON

African penguins at Boulders Beach

## Tanzania

*In-country partner:* Pongo Safaris & Tours Limited

*Company overview:* Pongo Safaris & Tours has 38 years of experience organizing tours in Tanzania and other African nations. The company specializes in personalized safari packages throughout Tanzania that cover the country's many national parks and game reserves.

*Sample tour:* Those seeking a big-game experience can choose from Pongo's popular tours in the northern and southern parts of Tanzania. Northern itineraries often combine the Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater, and the Kilimanjaro area, and southern packages feature Mikumi National Park, Selous Game Reserve, and Udzungwa National Park.

*Country fun fact:* Stone Town on the island of Zanzibar is known for its interesting architecture and Swahili-style doors that feature brass studs and intricate carvings. The historical town also was the birthplace of Queen singer Freddie Mercury, and visitors can go to his namesake house museum.

*To learn more, email Scholastica Ponera at [info@pongosafaris.com](mailto:info@pongosafaris.com) or go to [pongosafaris.com](http://pongosafaris.com).*



PAT HENDERSON

Safari at Ngorongoro Crater

## Zambia

*In-country partner:* Zamag Tours & Safaris

*Company overview:* For the past 30 years, Daphne Lindsay has been involved in planning and leading safari and agricultural tours in Africa. She and her husband, Ian, founded Zambia-based Zamag Tours & Safaris, and they offer itineraries that cover Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Botswana.

*Sample tour:* Safari packages in Zambia showcase hippos, zebras, elephants, and leopards, as well as some of the nation's signature outdoor attractions: Kafue National Park, Victoria Falls, and South Luangwa National Park.

*Country fun fact:* Lindsay says there are more than 70 different languages spoken in Zambia, and each tribe also has its own cultures and ceremonies. "Our clients might visit a local village and learn about traditional customs and daily living, or they might visit a school and meet the children and teachers."

*To learn more, email Daphne Lindsay at [daphne@zamagsafaris.com](mailto:daphne@zamagsafaris.com) or go to [zamagsafaris.com](http://zamagsafaris.com).*



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Victoria Falls



# Southern Europe and Armenia

COMPILED BY KAY SAFFARI



Assisi, part of Michelangelo's Land of Miracles Tour

## Inspiration in Italy

As one of the most popular destinations in the world, Italy offers a range of experiences—stunning landscapes, fantastic culinary options, history, culture, art, and religious sites of great significance. In addition to this wealth of tourism offerings, groups can enjoy special events and specialty tours as well.



Pope Francis in Rome

### Special tours

Looking for an inspirational Italian tour? Aldo Caronia of Michelangelo International Travel suggests the company's Land of Miracles Tour. "This tour combines religion, art, and culture, and includes being part of the Papal Audience in Rome," says Caronia. "Groups will also visit several picturesque towns where famous miracles occurred."

For those looking to combine adventure and faith, Michelangelo's Assisi-to-Rome tour is the perfect choice. Travelers follow the footsteps of St. Francis—literally—as they hike from Assisi to Rome, visiting remote monasteries and churches along the way.

For more information, contact Caronia at [aldo.caronia@michelangelo.travel](mailto:aldo.caronia@michelangelo.travel) or visit [michelangelo.travel](http://michelangelo.travel).

### Special events: Italy + Oberammergau

Ruggero Scoma of RS Travel Development in Rome is offering special combination tour packages built around the once-in-a-decade Passion Play that takes place in a tiny town in Germany's Bavarian Alps this year. "Our Rome to Oberammergau tour provides groups with the best of Italy, sites in Austria, and the unique experience of the Passion Play," Scoma explains. "This 12-day tour starts in Rome and ends in Munich, with stops in all the iconic sites in Rome, three villages in Tuscany, Florence, Pisa, and Venice—along with stays in Austria and of course, Oberammergau."

For more information, contact Scoma at [info@rstravel.it](mailto:info@rstravel.it) or visit [rstravel.it](http://rstravel.it).

CC FLICKR/JEFFREY BRUNO/ALETTIA: bit.ly/3o6xwB

TOP PHOTO: MICHELANGELO INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

## Let's talk Turkey

Turkey, a country located between Europe and the Middle East, is an eclectic mix of East and West in its culture, food, architecture, and amazing sites. NTA members Karavan Travel and TripOTour offer expert planning and the perfect itinerary for groups.

**Karavan Travel**, owned by the Baltazzi family for more than 50 years, provides 15 different cultural and archeological tours that range from seven to 16 days. For example, the 10-day Highlights of Turkey tour includes stops in Istanbul, Ankara, and Cappadocia (among others), where groups will visit museums, important architectural sites, natural wonders, and ancient churches.

Karavan also offers four different faith-based tours, including the popular four-day Churches of the Revelation trip that brings the stories of the Bible to life. Both Christian- and Jewish-focused packages also are available.

**TripOTour** offers 29 itineraries in the U.S. and Europe, but the company specializes in group tours to Turkey, thanks to company owner, Mete Gurel. "I was born in Antioch and raised in Istanbul," says Gurel, "so taking groups to my homeland is especially meaningful to me."

Gurel views it as a privilege to share the history, faith-related sites, food, and culture of Turkey with travelers visiting his country. "It's my goal to provide the best possible experience for travelers coming to my country on a once-in-a-lifetime trip."

The company, with offices in Istanbul and Washington, D.C., offers 17 different tours in Turkey, ranging from the four-day tour of Istanbul to the 14-day Footsteps of Paul/Seven Churches faith-based tour. "On all our tours, we offer the best guides in the country, and we provide access to unique locations."



Both companies have several cruise options on gulets, the two- or three-masted wooden sailboats famous in Turkey's coastal towns of Bodrum and Marmaris. These tours provide the opportunity to explore picturesque villages and historical and cultural sites along the way.

For more information, contact Giancarlo Baltazzi at [giancarlo.baltazzi@karavanturkey.com](mailto:giancarlo.baltazzi@karavanturkey.com) or visit [karavanturkey.com](http://karavanturkey.com), or contact Mete Gurel at [mete@tripotour.com](mailto:mete@tripotour.com) or visit [tripotour.com](http://tripotour.com).

## Marvelous Malta

Famous for having some of the best weather in the world, the archipelago islands that compose the country of Malta lie in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea 58 miles south of Sicily. One of the smallest countries in Europe, Malta is a hidden gem in the tourism world, offering groups a unique and unforgettable experience.

As one of the oldest European civilizations—dating back to 5500 B.C.—Malta offers a journey through history that highlights the many settlers on the island, including the Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, and the British, among others. The capital city of Valletta is a UNESCO World Heritage site that has more than 320 monuments, 38 churches and cathedrals, and 20 museums.

Exclusively Malta, as the name implies, is a tour operator that specializes in the islands and offers a variety of tours that explore the unique mix of culture, history, and natural beauty found in the country's 122 square miles. Whether a group wants to see historical sites around the capital city and the beautiful Baroque architecture, or simply enjoy the beaches and crystal blue water, Exclusively Malta can work out the details.

Some of the company's most popular tours focus on culture and history, faith (including Jewish culture), food and wine, and adventure travel. Exclusively Malta can also arrange itineraries around the many Maltese festivals that occur year-round.

For more information, contact Jason Allan at [jason@exclusivelymalta.com](mailto:jason@exclusivelymalta.com) or visit [exclusivelymalta.com](http://exclusivelymalta.com).



Boats in a Malta harbor

CC FLICKR/LEANDRO NEUMANN CUFFO: btlv/zqdw9





Sunset in Santorini

## Go for Greece

Travel planners eyeing Greece can work with two NTA-member destination management companies to create memorable itineraries.

**Amphitriton Group** offers all the necessary resources for one-stop planning and creates customized itineraries that include a full range of accommodations—from hotels to villas to furnished apartments—as well as all in-country transportation (including ferries and flights), sightseeing tours, restaurants, and multilingual tour guides.

The company owns a fleet of 31 luxury motorcoaches that are equipped with state-of-the-art amenities for larger groups, as well as company-owned taxis and limousines for individuals or small groups.

For more information, contact Constantinos Mitsiou at [dinosmitsiou@amphitriton.gr](mailto:dinosmitsiou@amphitriton.gr) or visit [amphitritongroup.com](http://amphitritongroup.com).

**TourGreece** was founded 40 years ago and specializes in tailor-made incoming services for groups, individuals, and business conferences.

The company provides customized itineraries for all types of tours, including land, combination land/cruise, and island-hopping. Its religious itineraries focus on sites related to Christian history and often include both land and cruise segments.

For an authentic Greek experience, groups can enjoy a culinary and winery tour that highlights the delectable food and wine offerings in restaurants across Greece—from Athens to the islands of Paros, Santorini, and Heraklion.

TourGreece will also help plan a customized itinerary to meet a group's specific needs.

For more information, contact Vassilis Sakellaris at [v.sakellaris@tourgreece.gr](mailto:v.sakellaris@tourgreece.gr) or visit [tourgreece.gr](http://tourgreece.gr).

## Adventures in Armenia

Situated in the cultural, historical, and religious intersections between Europe and Asia east of Turkey, Armenia is a new destination for many. In addition to the country's wealth of cultural sites, travelers will enjoy fresh and delicious culinary options, stunning landscapes, and the most hospitable people on the planet.

"We are an experienced local DMC, and we work with our partners to create tailor-made tours for groups and individuals," says Amalia Stepanyan of ESI DMC Armenia. "Our itineraries of 10 to 14 days include important cultural sites, city tours, and museum and gallery visits, as well as faith-related and natural sites."

Some must-see places, according to Stepanyan, are Geghard Monastery, a collection of religious buildings built between the 4th and 13th centuries, several of them actually carved into a soaring granite mountain; Lake Sevan, one of the largest freshwater, high-altitude lakes in Eurasia; and the 9th-century Tatev Monastery, the jewel of medieval Armenian architecture that is best reached via the world's longest reversible cable car, the Wings of Tatev.

To get an authentic taste of Armenian culture, Stepanyan suggests participating in one of the many festivals around the country. Visitors can choose from food, music, and regional festivals held throughout the year. "And wine enthusiasts can enjoy a festival in the capital city of Yerevan in May or in Areni in October." Armenia has outstanding wine, thanks to a



Festival dancers

ESI DMC ARMENIA

winemaking tradition dating back 6,100 years. In fact, travelers can visit the oldest winery in the world at Areni Cave, an active archeological site.

ESI DMC Armenia also offers a popular tour featuring Armenia and neighboring Georgia. Other tours combine a visit to Armenia with stops in Israel, Greece, or Turkey. "Because Armenia was the first official Christian nation, it makes sense to create itineraries that include other countries with a strong link to Christianity," explains Stepanyan.

For more information, contact Stepanyan at [amalia.stepanyan@dmcarmenia.com](mailto:amalia.stepanyan@dmcarmenia.com) or visit [dmcarmenia.com](http://dmcarmenia.com).



## *Courier's* Guide to NTA-member Rail Companies

It's hard to beat seeing a winding stream against the backdrop of snow-capped peaks from the seat of a luxury train. Exploring remote places—unreachable by car or motorcoach—to discover wildlife, forests, and mountainous areas is a powerful draw for rail travelers.

In addition to taking in the scenery at a leisurely pace, travelers can enjoy gourmet meals and wine tastings, live entertainment, themed rides, and special-event itineraries during train trips. The following NTA members provide these experiences as part of the sightseeing excursions and multi-day itineraries they offer.

The information for this guide was provided by the member contact and was current as of Jan. 15. With this and all other guides that appear in *Courier*, members can contact [kendall@ntaservicesinc.com](mailto:kendall@ntaservicesinc.com) to enhance their presence.

### CANADA

#### Rocky Mountaineer

Michael Comeau  
1100-980 Howe St.  
Vancouver, BC V6Z 0G8  
877.460.3200  
[mcomeau@rockymountaineer.com](mailto:mcomeau@rockymountaineer.com)  
[rockymountaineer.com](http://rockymountaineer.com)

#### VIA Rail Canada Inc.

Ryan Robutka  
International Sales  
1150 Station St., Suite 300  
Vancouver, BC V6A 4C7  
+1.604.640.3741  
[ryan\\_robutka@viarail.ca](mailto:ryan_robutka@viarail.ca)  
[viarail.ca](http://viarail.ca)

### UNITED STATES

#### ALASKA

#### Alaska Railroad Corporation

Heather Dudick  
431 W. 1st Ave.  
Anchorage, AK 99501-1635  
+1.907.265.2622  
[dudickh@akrr.com](mailto:dudickh@akrr.com)  
[alaskarailroad.com](http://alaskarailroad.com)



## White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad

Jacqueline Taylor-Rose  
P.O. Box 435  
Skagway, AK 99840-0435  
+1.907.983.9821  
jtaylor-rose@wpyr.com  
wpyr.com

## ARIZONA

### Grand Canyon Railway

Erick Valdes  
233 N. Grand Canyon Blvd.  
Williams, AZ 86046  
+1.928.213.3845 (2267)  
evaldes@xanterra.com  
thetrain.com

### Verde Canyon Railroad

Teresa Propeck  
300 North Broadway  
Clarkdale, AZ 86324-2302  
+1.602.316.9887  
tpropeck@verdecanyonrr.net  
verdecanyonrr.com

## CALIFORNIA

### Railcar Montana

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

### Roaring Camp Railroads

Joanne Hirasaki  
5401 Graham Hill Road  
Felton, CA 95018-0346  
+1.831.335.4484  
joanne@roaringcamp.com  
roaringcamp.com

### Sierra Railroad

Chris Hart  
1222 Research Park Drive  
Davis, CA 95618  
+1.530.554.2522  
chart@sierrarailroad.com  
sierrarailroad.com

## COLORADO

### American Heritage Railroads

Carrie Whitley  
479 Main Ave.  
Durango, CO 81301-5421  
+1.970.259.0274  
cwhitley@durangotrain.com  
durangotrain.com

### Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad

Corrine Williams  
5234B U.S. Highway 285  
Antonito, CO 81120  
877.890.2737  
groups@cumbrestoltec.com  
cumbrestoltec.com

### Georgetown Loop Railroad

Tom Hill  
1520 Argentine St.  
Georgetown, CO 80444  
+1.303.569.0133  
tom.hill@historicroadadventures.com  
georgetownlooprailroad.com

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get *Courier's* original  
stories ... that might  
include you!



## NEW HAMPSHIRE

### Conway Scenic Railroad

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

### The Mount Washington Cog Railway

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

## PENNSYLVANIA

### Strasburg Rail Road Co.

Alicia Cerankowski  
301 Gap Road  
Strasburg, PA 17572  
+1.717.687.6193  
groups@strasburgrailroad.com  
strasburgrailroad.com

## TEXAS

### Texas State Railroad

Jennifer Price  
535 Park Road 76  
Rusk, TX 75785  
+1.903.724.1324  
jennifer.price@texasstaterailroad.net  
texasstaterailroad.net

## TOUR OPERATORS

The NTA membership also includes a group of tour operators that specialize in rail travel. Here is the contact information for those companies, which take groups and FITs on rail journeys.

### America by Rail

H. Lawrence Swartz  
5000 Northwind Drive  
East Lansing, MI 48823-5044  
+1.517.333.4223  
lswartz@americabyrail.com  
americabyrail.com

### Great Rail Journeys

Yung Mei Choi  
9 St. Saviourgate  
North Yorkshire, England YO1 8NL  
866.834.8382  
yungmeichoi@greatrail.com  
greatrail.com

### Mexico's Copper Canyon Tours/ Chihuahua al Pacifico Tours

Carlos Saenz  
Ave. Mirador #3325  
Copper Canyon Country  
Chihuahua, Mexico 31260  
+52.614.410.99.56  
info@coppercanyontours.com.mx  
coppercanyontours.com.mx

### Rail Source International

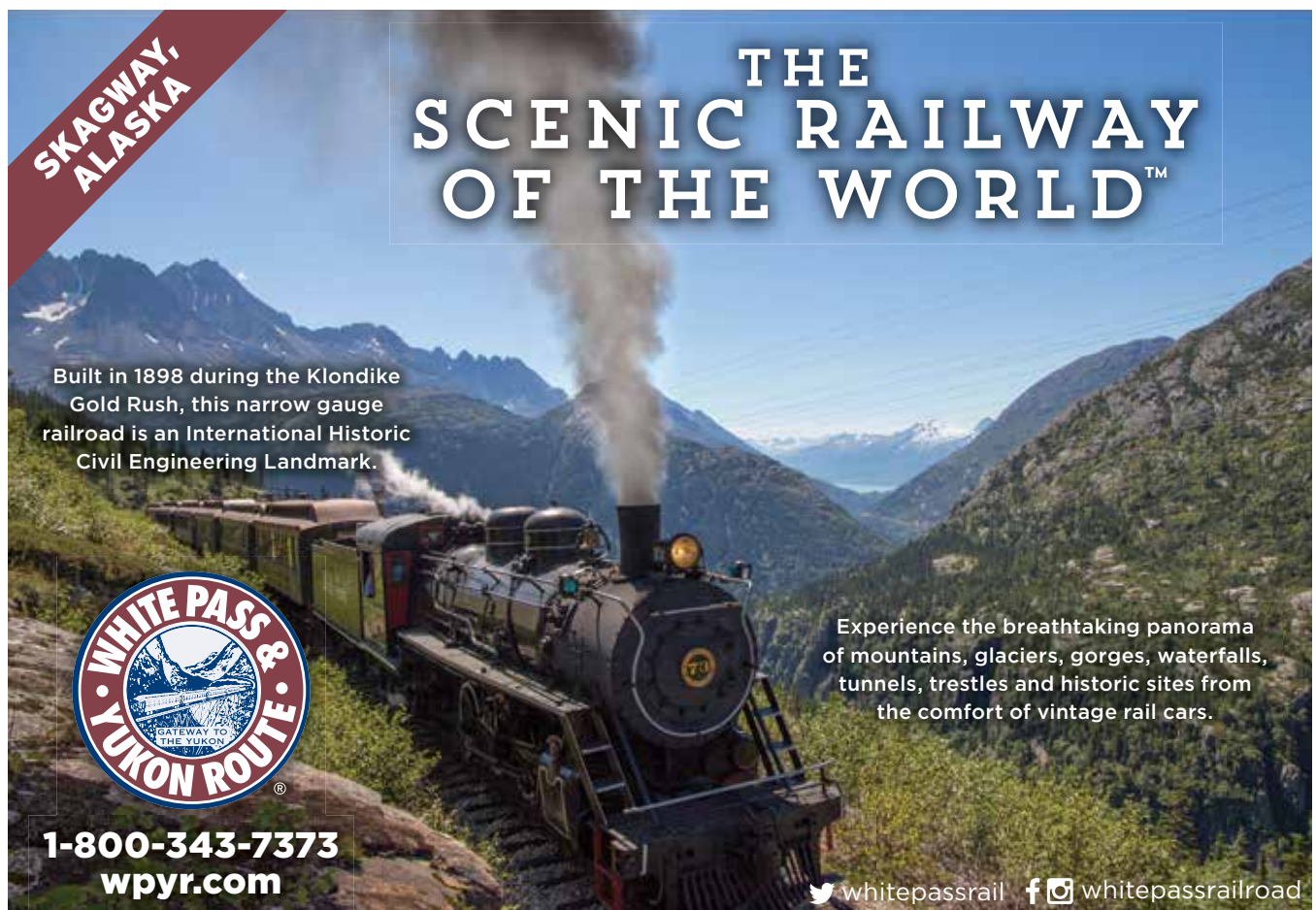
Carmen Metcalf  
2485 Jennings Road  
Olin, NC 28660-9432  
+1.704.876.9081  
info@rsiworld.com  
rsiworld.com

### VBR Tours

Todd Powell  
309 W. Washington St., Suite 650  
Chicago, IL 60606  
877.929.7245 (801)  
tpowell@vacationsbyrail.com  
vacationsbyrail.com

### Yankee Holidays/Amtrak Vacations

Andrew Channell  
500 Cummings Center, Suite 3100  
Beverly, MA 01915-6115  
+1.978.867.1135  
andrew.channell@ylginc.com  
ylginc.com



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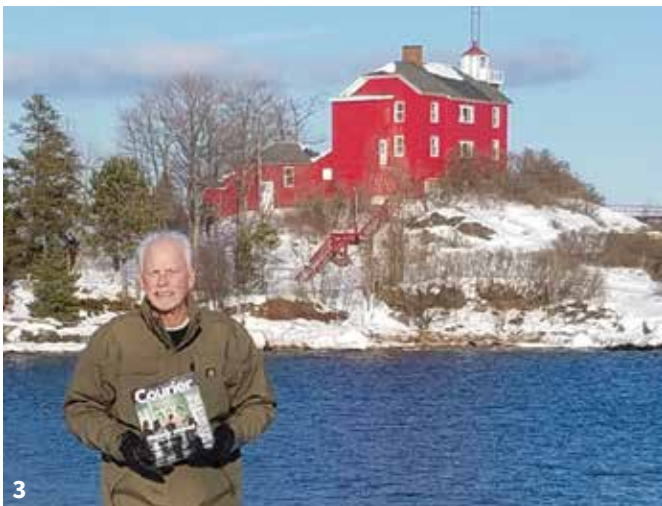
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Account Manager  
[Brian.Morin@staples.com](mailto:Brian.Morin@staples.com)  
603-223-2091





## Where in the world is *Courier*? Turns out, a lot of places!

1. Mindy Shea and Anjuli Derien of Visit Savannah
2. Benjamin Maddy of Ripley's Believe It or Not! Times Square
3. Fred Huffman, Michigan's Upper Peninsula Travel & Recreation Association, and the Marquette Harbor Lighthouse overlooking Lake Superior
4. Fran Mathews of Oregon's Marine Discovery Tours
5. Marlijn Kok of Leiden, Key to Discovery (Netherlands)
6. Floy Kennedy, Visit Colorado Springs, with the Flying W Wranglers at the soon-to-reopen Flying W Ranch Chuckwagon Dinner & Western Show



# Meet the Members

## Hagey Tours

SOUDERTON, PENNSYLVANIA

**NTA contact:** Shannon Bauman

**Office phone:** +1.215.723.4381

**Website:** hagey.com

**NTA member since:** 1976

### **Hagey Tours is a family business. How did it come to be?**

My colleagues' grandfather, Clarence Hagey, left the farm with an interest in mechanics. In 1936 he got a school bus contract, and after WWII, when the area was growing, he opened a motorcoach charter business. Over time, his sons and their families grew the businesses and continue to operate them after 84 years.

### **What are a couple of your most popular tours right now?**

One is New York City's Bronx Zoo. I think there's a TV show about zoos, so we have had a renewed interest in them. We're also running a new trip called "ZOO Much Fun," going to three Midwest zoos. Another popular tour, the Purple Moose Tour, takes travelers to New Hampshire to see the lupines (purple flowers) and moose up close. It's interesting how our customers are looking for nature.

### **What's your favorite part of your job?**

Planning. Planning a trip, planning a meeting, or planning a birthday party for a colleague.

### **What's your favorite destination to visit?**

I am an Anglophile, so I love Britain—Brexit and all. Within our borders, I am a city girl, with New York City at the top of the heap!

### **What are the latest tunes in your iTunes library?**

I am a podcast listener, and I particularly enjoy "WTF" with Marc Maron. Of late, he interviewed Kate Nash, whose music I love.

### **What do you like to do on the weekends?**

My husband and I are English Premier League Football (soccer) fans. We watch as many matches as we can, and we cheer on our favorite team, Manchester City F.C.



For more information, contact Bauman at [shannon@hagey.com](mailto:shannon@hagey.com).

## Mirvish Productions

TORONTO, ONTARIO

**NTA contact:** Natasha Springett

**Office phone:** +1.416.872.1212 / 800.461.3333

**Website:** mirvish.com

**NTA member since:** 2018

### **Tell us about Mirvish Productions' history.**

This Canadian theater management and production company based in Toronto was founded by David Mirvish in 1987. He created the company to produce original plays and musicals, to employ Canadian talent for the Royal Alexandra's stage, and to co-produce with regional Canadian theaters and bring their works to Toronto. The company currently owns and operates four premier theater venues in downtown Toronto's robust Entertainment District.

### **Why is a visit to the theater a must-do when in the city?**

Apart from being one of the world's most diverse cities, Toronto is often the gateway for

productions that make their way to Broadway. The city has played host to shows such as "The Lion King," "Phantom of The Opera," and "Les Miserables." Toronto is currently home to the hit musical "Come From Away," and the city is excited about "Hamilton," which debuted in February. Theater and the arts in general are an integral part of the city's social fabric, and a visit to the theater provides a wonderful glimpse into the heart of the city.

### **What are some of your group benefits for ticket purchasing?**

Advance access to great seats, reduced rates, and easy payment plans

### **Have you visited a destination that surprised you?**

Milwaukee! I had no idea how steeped in history and arts and culture the city was until I visited in 2018 for the NTA conference.

### **What's a hobby of yours?**

Tennis



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

For more information, contact Springett at [nspringett@mirvish.com](mailto:nspringett@mirvish.com).

## The Mill Casino • Hotel & RV Park

NORTH BEND, OREGON

**NTA contact:** Amy Bailey, sales manager

**Office phone:** 800.953.4800, ext.1574

**Website:** themillcasino.com

**NTA member since:** 2014

### What makes your casino stand out?

Location, location, location! We are on beautiful Coos Bay along the southern Oregon coast. We have fantastic restaurants, many entertainment options, and of course, the experience on the gaming floor. Oregonians by nature are warm and friendly, and we make sure to extend that hospitality throughout our property.

### What attracts travelers to your area?

North Bend is part of Oregon's Adventure Coast, which also includes Coos Bay and Charleston along the famed Highway 101. We are minutes away from gorgeous beaches, unique land formations like the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area, stunning trails, and outdoor adventures for all levels of activities.

### What's something new you're promoting?

It's our 25th anniversary this year! We've

added more giveaways, new games on the slot floor, and sports betting. Our annual 3rd of July Fireworks over the Bay celebration will be the largest fireworks display in Oregon. We'll also be adding a new signature outdoor event in July that you won't want to miss!

### I love my job because ...

Every day brings its own excitement, whether I'm working on plans for or helping to create one of our signature outdoor events like BBQ, Blues & Brews on the Bay; planning a company retreat to the coast; or greeting tour buses as they arrive at the property.

### What's your dream vacation?

All our family vacations are planned around which body of water we'll be able to enjoy. I really loved a short cruise ship stop in Puerto Rico and would love to go back and really explore.

### Have you binged on any notable TV series lately?

As a working mom with two young kids, my TV time has mostly been classic Disney



movies. I think I might actually enjoy them more than my kids!

For more information, contact Bailey at [abailey@themillcasino.com](mailto:abailey@themillcasino.com).

## Grand View Inn & Suites

WASILLA, ALASKA

**NTA contact:** Chevy Sharlow

**Office phone:** +1.907.352.1700

**Website:** alaskagrandview.com

**NTA member since:** 2018

### What can travelers expect from a stay at your hotel?

Grand View has standard hotel rooms as well as extended-stay suites. What's great about our hotel, apart from the many amenities and friendly staff, is the location in Alaska. We are centrally located in the state, so travelers can use Grand View as a home base and be within short driving distances from a lot of the activities and towns they want to visit and explore.

### What are a couple of nearby attractions?

We have so many things to do in our part of Alaska. There are lots of hiking trails, ATV trails, and fishing spots, and the views are amazing. The city of Palmer is 10 minutes away and has a beautiful downtown shopping area.

### What's your ideal vacation spot?

If I could take my family anywhere, it would be to Europe. Our country, and specifically Alaska, is very young, and I would love to see some old history.

### What tunes are you listening to these days?

I've been listening to the Young the Giant station.

### What's the most unique food you've ever eaten on your travels?

This might be a boring answer: fruit. In Alaska, we don't grow a lot of fruit, and the products that they offer in the store have been shipped from far away. Going down to the states, I enjoy the selection in the stores, and I always want to try something new.



For more information, contact Sharlow at [chevy.sharlow@gmail.com](mailto:chevy.sharlow@gmail.com).



# Introducing ... NTA's newest members

## Vishni Destination Management

LONDON

*Tour supplier*

VDM is a UK-based DMC that has deep roots (and routes!) in India, where the company specializes in ground services. It offers a wide variety of holidays, from adventure to honeymoons.



**Dev Bhojwani**

CEO

+44.78.1783.6855

vishnidm@gmail.com

vishdm.com

*"I'm a father of two toddlers (half human, half bear!), busy running a DMC and working on launching a travel company in the U.S. later this year."*

## National Museum of African American Music

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

*Tour supplier*

The attraction, set to open this summer, will be the only museum dedicated to preserving the legacy of the many music genres created, influenced, and inspired by African Americans. The museum will share the story of the American soundtrack by integrating history and interactive technology to bring the musical heroes of the past into the present.



**Dionne Lucas**

Director of retail marketing and sales

+1.615.301.8724

dilucas@nmaam.org

nmaam.org

*"I've been at NMAAM since 2018 and enjoy the challenge of bringing a brand-new, world-class museum to life. Join us this summer for our grand opening!"*

## WorldQuest Resort

ORLANDO, FLORIDA

*Tour supplier*

Located two miles from the entrance of Walt Disney World Resort in a gated community, this resort features spacious two- and three-bedroom suites complete with full kitchens and washers and dryers. Discover more room, more comfort, and more choices.



**Jackie Moquin**

Director of sales

+1.407.387.3800

jackiemoquin@

worldquestorlando.com

worldquestorlando.com

*"I have been in the hospitality industry for the last 26 years in the Orlando area. I love meeting new people and traveling, and I am very excited to be part of NTA."*

## Acquaforte Italian Travel Designer

VENICE, ITALY

*Tour operator*

The family-owned, boutique DMC specializes in tailor-made special-interest tours all over Italy. The company was founded in 2008 and has expanded to a team of 15 women. Agricultural tours, incentive travel, cultural tours, and VIP and luxury travel are some of the company's niches.



**Alice Contiero**

Managing director

+39.041.464700

alice@acquaforte.eu

acquaforte.eu

*"My passion for organizing and learning languages and discovering new cultures allows me to offer the best experiences for my client. I am an art lover and a keen trekker in the Dolomites area, and I enjoy spending time with my two lovely dogs and my nephew."*

## Juneau Food Tours

JUNEAU, ALASKA

*Tour operator*

Juneau Food Tours is a locally owned and operated culinary-experiences company offering walking tours that feature the best in Alaska fare as well as combo tours with whale watching, sport fishing, and more. New for 2020 is the culinary cruise with stops at four ports.



**Midgi Moore**

Owner

+1.907.723.8478

midgi@juneau

foodtours.com

juneaufoodtours.com

*"I've lived in Juneau for 10 years, and this year will be my sixth summer sharing Juneau's food scene through our tours. I love food! I love eating it, cooking it, talking about it, and most of all, sharing it!"*

## PROFILES ENCOURAGED

Think of your member profile on NTA Online as a digital elevator pitch that other members rely on when making business appointments or conducting online searches. Is your profile up to date? To find out, log in and click the "welcome" words in the upper right corner. ☛

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815 E. St. Louis St.  
Springfield, MO 65806  
Toll free:  
Phone: 417.881.5300 (112)  
Fax: 417.881.2231  
Website: <http://www.springfieldmo.org>

## NEW MEMBERS

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

### DMOs

**Northwest Territories Tourism**  
Wayne Nowak  
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2N5 Canada  
spectacularnwt.com

**Woodford County Tourist Commission**  
Emily Downey  
Versailles, KY 40383 USA  
reservewoodford.com

### TOUR OPERATORS

**Acquaforthe Italian Travel Designer**  
Alice Contiero  
Venice, 30030 Italy  
acquaforthe.eu

**Coltur Peruana de Turismo S.A.**  
Mariana Watson  
Lima, 18 Peru  
colturperu.com



**Juneau Food Tours**  
Midgi Moore  
Juneau, AK 99801 USA  
juneaufoodtours.com

**Original Travel Management**  
Reg Xue  
West Covina, CA 91790 USA  
originaltravel.agency

**Washington Business Group USA LLC**  
Jenny Wang  
McLean, VA 22102 USA  
usawbg.com

### TOUR SUPPLIERS

**The Histrionic Academy LLC**  
Tim Maguire  
Salem, MA 01970 USA  
tourofthefreedomtrail.com

**MGM Transportation Inc.**  
Andreas Andreasyan  
Antelope, CA 95643 USA  
limomgm.com

**Old Barracks Museum**  
Michelle Doherty  
Trenton, NJ 08608 USA  
barracks.org

**WorldQuest Resort**  
Jackie Moquin  
Orlando, FL 32821 USA  
worldquestorlando.com

**Yellowstone Helicopters**  
Cindy Reese  
Blackfoot, ID 83221 USA  
yellowstoneheli.com

### ASSOCIATE

**SlapBandMarketing.com**  
Joseph Smith  
Sevierville, TN 37862 USA  
slapbandmarketing.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



SHUTTERSTOCK



**Anchorage, Alaska**  
March 18-21, 2020



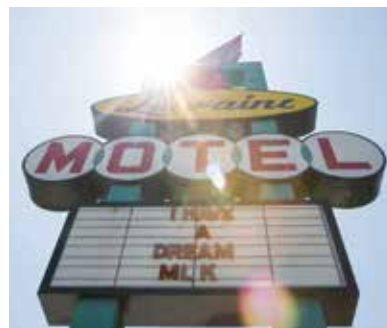
CC FLICKR/NICOLAS RAYMOND: bit.ly/1wP7Zqz



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



**Reno Tahoe**  
Nov. 15-19, 2020



**Memphis, Tennessee**  
March 17-20, 2021



**Cleveland**  
Nov. 14-18, 2021

RIGHT, FROM TOP: VISITRENOTAHOE.COM, DAVID MEANY/CONTACT PURCHASE/MEMPHIS CVB, AERIAL AGENTS FOR THISISCLEVELAND.COM



# 82,000 meals

BY SHERRY CONSTANCE



Sherry Constance

FOOD, LIKE TRAVEL, has the unique ability to change us. To open our eyes to new cultures, new flavors, and new experiences, and to create lasting memories through all five senses. Each dish has a story of its own: its creation, its ingredients, the hands that crafted it, and in some cases, the many years of tradition it carries. The first taste of a dish can transport you to another world, another time. It can evoke a distant memory and instantly create new ones.

In New Orleans, a city clearly known for its food, we have a saying: At breakfast we're talking about lunch, and at lunch we're planning what's for dinner. To a great extent our days are centered around our meals. Dining is more than just the food; it's an experience.

We were brunching before it became trendy, and the best business deals happen during "Friday Lunch": when you go to lunch on a Friday and eat, drink, and socialize until (or



Jambalaya

TRAVELING NEWLYWEDS

through!) happy hour without worries or cares of going back to work. Bonds, relationships, and many inside jokes are made—"you simply had to be there."

People always wonder what the secret is to the deliciousness of New Orleans cuisine. We've long answered that it is the heart and soul of the people who create it. The same with our music. It is less about the measurements and more about the feeling. I believe that great New Orleans cooking is intuitive, and with each dish that carries that soul, you experience a part of us.

It brings you closer to who we are.

And that's one of the best byproducts of the dining experience. It is the breaking of bread—shared between friends, traveling companions, and business constituents—and the bonds it creates. It is also the connection of a diner to the homeland of the dish.

Just thinking of certain dishes can evoke images of the places they are from in your mind: deep-dish pizza, seafood paella, clam chowder, dim sum, cheesesteak, pho, masala, spanakopita, gumbo ... the list goes on and on. The love and appreciation for the cuisine of a destination can make you feel more connected to that place even if you have never been there. It can also be a reason to travel there.

My bucket-list destination is India—for many reasons, but definitely for the food. I travel quite a bit, and no matter what city I am in, I always find a local Indian restaurant to try. I order way too many things, chat with the owners or staff, and let the scents and flavors take over. My mind conjures images of brightly colored clothing, stunning waterfronts, and ornate architecture. I cannot wait until one day I am eating Indian food in India!

Most people can expect to have 82,000 meals in their lifetime. That's 82,000 chances for a new experience, a new connection ... or a memory relived.

It's 82,000 chances to feed your soul. 🍴

Sherry Constance is director of sales for The Court of Two Sisters, a legendary restaurant located in New Orleans' French Quarter. Reach her at [sconstance@courtoftwosisters.com](mailto:sconstance@courtoftwosisters.com).

ZACK SMITH

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## For more information about the NTA Travel Protection Plan:

Call 1.800.388.1470

Fax 516.294.0609

Email [geni.priolo@aon.com](mailto:geni.priolo@aon.com)

- Enroll in the NTA Travel Protection plans – Easy as 1,2,3
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